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# A Transformative Classroom Experience: Exploring Campus Mental Health through Theatre For Dialogue

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# A Transformative Classroom Experience: Exploring Campus Mental Health through Theatre For Dialogue

**by**

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# Dedication

This document is dedicated to the undergraduate students who continue to question the world around them, take steps to create social change and inspire others.

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# Abstract

## A Transformative Classroom Experience: Exploring Campus Mental Health through Theatre For Dialogue

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This MFA thesis document investigates the experience of participants in a *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course. During the fall of 2014, a small group of undergraduate and graduate students used the Voices Against Violence Theatre For Dialogue methodology to explore issues of student mental health at The University of Texas at Austin. Working from a feminist pedagogical framework, this qualitative study uses narrative thematic analysis to examine how key aspects of the semester-long course supported transformative learning and a shift in identity for each of the course participants. This document concludes with a discussion of limitations and recommendations for employing the Theatre For Dialogue methodology in university and community-based settings.

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# Chapter 1

In the middle of Montana it is possible to stand in one place and see the sky stretch from one horizon to the next. It was here, nestled amongst the Bitterroot Valley that I spent my days as an undergraduate student at the University of Montana (UM) darting around like a human hummingbird. In January of 2002 I enrolled at UM with a focus on theatre arts. I was a full-time student working two part-time jobs, invested in learning all I could about community-based theatre practices and feminist performance theory. I was engaged in learning about who I was, how I situated myself in the world and how I could be an activist for equality in all things- I was young and full of energy. I remember being busy, not too busy, but perfectly busy *all* the time.

It was at UM- under the guidance of my academic advisor, Jillian Campana- that I was first introduced to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) techniques. I was instantly drawn to the Theatre of the Oppressed approach, which uses theatre as an interactive tool to create dialogue and to promote social change among audience members. At the same time I began to learn more about activism and openly identified myself as a feminist. The university did not offer courses on applied theatre practices, like TO, so a few months later, a colleague and I officially registered within the academic structure of UM for an independent study, which we called: *Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed- Popular Theatre Studies.* Our course objectives aimed to gain a basic understanding of TO practice and theory and culminated in a three-day workshop with Augusto Boal at the annual Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference. Our

investigation of TO practices led to the creation of *ActiveNow!* a youth activist theatre group that was established to engage the teens of Missoula, Montana in dialogue around community issues and empowerment through artistic expression. Through unique opportunities as an undergraduate, I began to see the potential of how theatre could be used as a tool to help create social change in my own community.

My continued passion to explore educational activist theatre work, both as a theatre practitioner and feminist, is what led me to graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) in the fall of 2012. During my first year I enrolled in a two-semester course called, *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Interpersonal Violence*. The course focused on using the tools of theatre to explore issues of interpersonal violence on UT Austin's campus. The program is structured to educate both the students in the room and the greater UT Austin campus and community about sexual violence, relationship violence, ally support and resources. The following year I served as the teaching assistant (TA) for the yearlong undergraduate course, *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Interpersonal Violence*. This opportunity enabled me to gain a facilitator's perspective into the construction and implementation of a dynamic, innovative approach to theatre as a tool for social change within the university context.

From my experience as student and TA in the Theatre For Dialogue course, I was struck by the ways students utilized the power of ensemble within the class to make artistic choices and interact with the content. The mostly undergraduate students entered the fall semester as individuals and exited the spring semester as an ensemble, with a clearer understanding of how the interpersonal violence content relates to their daily lives

and an activist mindset to create change. I was intrigued by this phenomenon and wanted to know more about why this course impacted the students in such a distinct way?

As a TA in various positions and also as a peer in mixed-level courses I witnessed undergraduates sharing stories of their relationships with anxiety, stress and depression. Sometimes this personal information was shared in order to receive extensions on assignments or exams, while other times the information was shared in everyday conversations. I began to wonder why so many of the students seemed to struggle with these issues. I wondered about the mental health services on UT's campus. Finally, I wondered if a Theatre For Dialogue model focused on campus mental health at UT Austin could be a productive academic course for undergraduate students.

Educational scholar and theorist, Paulo Freire states that in order to achieve critical consciousness, learners, particularly from marginalized communities, must be given the opportunity to see and understand the larger, societal, political and economical systems of oppression that shape their experience so that they may make change in their world (90). The Theatre For Dialogue (TFD) methodology engages participants in Freire's transformative learning process through the creation and activation of an interactive performance focused on relevant social issues. When used within the university context, TFD becomes a liberatory pedagogy which engages students in the investigation of the course content in relation to self, asks students to question how the content learned is situated in the world around them and then invites the activation of social change.

A feminist pedagogy also invites the learner to connect the content in relation to self, the world around them and to enact social change. Feminist pedagogue and scholar bell hooks describes her feminist pedagogical approach as work that is based in a shared learning experience: "A feeling of community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us. What we all ideally share is the desire to learn- to receive actively [-] knowledge that enhances our intellectual development and our capacity to live more fully in the world" (*Teaching* 40). A feminist pedagogy helps build classroom community and a shared commitment that aims to create awareness on the larger systems of power at play in the world.

In this thesis document I will discuss how the Theatre For Dialogue model shapes the experience of participants in a Theatre For Dialogue undergraduate course designed around the content of campus mental health specific to the UT Austin community. My research asks two key questions:

1. What is the experience of the students in a Theatre For Dialogue undergraduate course?
2. How does a Theatre For Dialogue undergraduate course create a transformative learning experience for participants around the content of campus mental health?

In the remainder of this chapter I will position Theatre For Dialogue as a critical, feminist approach, particularly when situated within a university setting. Next, I will discuss the significance of this research project and its relationship to mental health services on UT Austin's campus. I will offer a description of my project along with my research

methodology. I will conclude this chapter with an overview of the remaining MFA thesis document.

## BACKGROUND

Theatre For Dialogue is an interactive theatre process, rooted in a feminist pedagogy that engages audience members in dialogue around issues of interpersonal violence: sexual assault, stalking, dating and relationship violence at UT Austin. The TFD program, led by Theatre For Dialogue Specialist, Lynn Hoare, uses a feminist pedagogical approach to educate the undergraduate students at UT Austin in the areas of consent, sexual assault and healthy/unhealthy relationship behaviors. TFD is a model created specifically for the UT Austin campus community and pulls its methods and theory from a variety of applied theatre practices.

TFD is part of the Voices Against Violence (VAV) program at UT Austin. Originally born out of grant funding in 2001, VAV became a fully institutionalized program at UT Austin in 2007. VAV is housed within the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) at UT Austin and the program's work focuses on the spectrum of campus interpersonal violence, providing students with services, education and resources on issues such as sexual assault, stalking, dating and relationship violence and bystander intervention. VAV's all-inclusive work addresses primary prevention, ways to respond to incidences, outreach and continued activism ("About Voices").

TFD is a form of applied theatre that "creates opportunities for difficult discussions that help participants confront assumptions, gather information and make meaning around a topic or question- through the theatrical frame" (Hoare "Challenging"

143). Applied theatre is an umbrella term for theatre done with groups in non-traditional theatrical settings that engages both performers and audiences in content relevant to their communities. It "involves a community-building ethic whereby people come together to act, to reflect, to transform" (Taylor 77). Theatre For Dialogue performances explore the intersection between theatre and education as a way to investigate, reflect, provoke dialogue and serve as a rehearsal for reality without asking participants to share their own personal experiences. Although some of the Theatre For Dialogue's roots originate from an adapted form of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed's forum structure, it is Theatre in Education (TIE) that more closely aligns with TFD. TIE is an applied theatre model that combines the theatrical form with interactive moments in order to engage audiences in an educational or social justice goal.

In her book *Engaging Performance*, scholar and practitioner Jan Cohen-Cruz warns, "Theatre reproduces the same hierarchies that plague the world at large, the same assumptions of who can speak, who must listen and who is not even invited into the conversation" (5). As an applied theatre practice, TFD aims to create an inclusive space of equality where all communities, identities, genders and sexual orientations can engage in dialogue. A feminist pedagogy seeks to dismantle the hierarchy of a classroom environment and become an inclusive space for all voices to be heard. I approached my analysis of the TFD model through the lens of a feminist pedagogy. A feminist pedagogy seeks to break down the traditional hierarchy and create an inclusive space for all voices to be heard and thoughts to be shared. In her essay, "What Is Feminist Pedagogy?" Carolyn M. Shrewsbury suggests that:

> Feminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning - engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change. (6)

A feminist pedagogy is a reflective praxis that allows students to engage the content in relation to self, community and social justice. Feminist scholar and practitioner bell hooks believes that as instructors we have the ability to facilitate and cultivate a classroom community of learners who work together for educational purposes. She claims that the collected effort of the students and the facilitator will bring about an excitement to learn as a collective. "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (*Teaching* 8). Students who have a willingness to share their voices in a space of communal dialogue can build a community within the walls of a classroom setting.

Theatre has the ability to build connection amongst students. In *Radical Acts: Theatre and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*, Ann Elizabeth Armstrong and Kathleen Juhl note that feminist theatre pedagogy has the potential to create a transformative learning experience for the participants through its ability to move students beyond the personal and into an ensemble: "In moving students beyond the personal, theatre can complement feminist pedagogies by actively engaging collaborative choices and requiring students to take points of view other than their own. Theatre processes create productive spaces for reflection. Within those spaces, students can negotiate differences,

discover common ground, and move to a collective consciousness" (12). Feminist scholar Jo Beth Gonzales defines transformation as, "the ongoing influence that a class can make on a student, even after the course is over" (264). In this document I use the term, transformative learning experience, to mean a shift in classroom culture in which students collectively work together to learn about the content, make artistic choices and build a community that extends outside of the classroom walls. I will also use Shrewsbury's theory that in order to create a transformative classroom in an academic setting we must facilitate with the three key concepts of empowerment, community and leadership.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

In the two years that I was actively involved with Lynn Hoare's Theatre For Dialogue courses at UT Austin, I watched the students build community as they engaged in the learning process together. How did learning about interpersonal violence become a class that students rarely missed? There is currently a gap in the literature on how and why Theatre For Dialogue is an effective learning model. What is it about the course structure, developed by Lynn Hoare at UT Austin, and the unique blend of the critical and feminist pedagogy and practice that supports the student learning?

According to the *Counseling and Mental Health Center Facts 2013-2014*, compiled by UT Austin's Counseling and Mental Health Center, in one year the CMHC crisis line received 1,819 calls, 646 students requested emergency day-of-appointments and 18,216 individual counseling sessions were attended by students ("CMHC Facts"). 70% of the students who visited the CMHC sought help for stress or anxiety-related issues. These statistics suggest a need for active dialogue around the issue of mental

health specific to UT Austin's campus community. In the article "Engaging Undergraduate Students to Be Agents of Social Change: Lessons from Student Affairs Professionals", Ashley Nickels, Theresa Rowland and Olubunmi Fadase state:

> As educators, it is our responsibility to develop students with knowledge and skills that provide mechanisms to effectively integrate academic disciplines with an understanding of self in relation to others on campus, in the community and across the globe…The classroom can effectively facilitate deeper understanding of how students are personally connected to greater social issues. Students develop as socially conscious leaders capable of creating sustainable social change. (46)

As I considered my own position as a UT student I realized that although I often heard students talk about their stress and anxiety I never heard anyone discuss seeking support. I began to wonder how the TFD model could help the undergraduate population at UT Austin engage in dialogue around the content of mental health and the current academic pressures that students seem to be facing. If students knew they were not alone in the struggle would they create a supportive community amongst themselves?

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

In the fall 2014 semester I created a new TFD undergraduate course at UT Austin called: *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health*. With a group of five undergraduate students enrolled in the course, I facilitated a TFD devised theatre process in which students explored and interrogated perceptions of mental health on the UT Austin campus. Class sessions were held twice a week for a total of three hours for thirteen consecutive weeks. The interdisciplinary course incorporated guest facilitators whose work and practices on the UT Austin campus closely tie to the field of mental health, specific to the UT community.

Students in the course – identifying as both performers and non-performers – spent the semester collaboratively engaging in a dialogical exchange around the content of student mental health. Together they engaged in a devised process that aimed to facilitate empowerment, build ensemble and promote leadership. The final product of the course was an informal performance sharing that engaged the larger UT Austin community in dialogue around campus mental health.

## METHODOLOGY

In this Human Subjects **I**nternal **R**eview **B**oard approved (see Appendix A) qualitative study I focused on five undergraduate participants as they engaged in a dialogic meaning-making process around campus mental health education and interactive theatre practices. The students generated data through shared stories, opinions and guest-facilitated class sessions around the content of campus mental health. Through a co-constructed interpretation of the content, both individual and as a collective, the participants created performative moments that culminated in an interactive theatre performance.

Primary data analyzed for this study came from participants' weekly written reflections, pre and post surveys, and transcribed discussions. I also analyzed my reflective practitioner field notes, which included detailed reflections from each class session, our half-day retreat and the final workshop sharing. All qualitative data was coded and analyzed for major themes related to the participants' experiences and processes of participating in the Theatre For Dialogue course model. In each of the data

sources, I considered the experience of the participants and whether a transformative learning experience was created.

## OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In this document I will explore how a Theatre for Dialogue model provides students a place of liberatory learning. To do this I will draw on Shrewsbury's argument that empowerment, ensemble and leadership are three essential elements needed to facilitate a feminist pedagogical transformation in an academic classroom setting (8). In this chapter I provide background information on the Theatre For Dialogue model at The University of Texas at Austin as well as my own research methodology and design for this practice-based research project. In Chapter Two I explore how key theories of applied theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre in Education and campus mental health have informed my project and research. In Chapter Three I explore how the Theatre For Dialogue model supports a transformative learning experience through specific choices made in the syllabus structure and course facilitation. The document concludes with recommendations for future research on TFD undergraduate courses.

## TRANSITIONING ALONE

My relationship to the CMHC and its services is personal. As a graduate student who relocated to Austin specifically for school, I left behind a community of supportive friends, artists and familiarity. I found myself placed in an environment where everything felt new and foreign. I wondered if I was too old to be back in school. I struggled to make friends and feel secure in my practice. I spent most of my time alone – the transition hit

me hard and I didn't feel as though anyone understood my situation. I knew about the services on campus because the Theatre For Dialogue course was located within the CMHC and I walked past the front desk weekly, so I made an appointment. CMHC provided me a place to talk openly about my transition to the university setting. My counselor helped me to understand that despite how alone I felt in the process, I wasn't the only person on campus who felt this way; transitions are difficult for a lot of students. Applied theatre practitioner Philip Taylor notes that for individuals, theatre has the ability to "shatter familiar perspectives and open up new possibilities for conceptualizing the world in which they live" (1). My experience at CMHC altered my perspective and I realized how all of UT Austin's students are joined together through the shared experience of transitioning to college – everyone has a first day.

# Chapter 2

> *What topics of this class did you find most compelling? (theatre aspect, investigating mental health, building ensemble, etc..)*
>
> I found all three aspects compelling. I found the theatre aspect incredibly compelling because 1) I had never participated in the creation and execution of a Theatre for Dialogue piece, 2) Participating in the process allowed me to step out of my comfort zone, and 3) I've always had a passion and love for theatre.
> I found the mental health aspect compelling because 1) I never knew how much I didn't know/needed to learn about mental health until I took this course, 2) My thoughts on mental health changed (I realized how important daily stressors truly are), 3) I was able to learn more about my boyfriend who suffers from various mental illnesses and myself in the process.
> I found the building ensemble aspect compelling because 1) I had never developed such deep relationships as the ones I built in the course after such a short period of time, 2) I grew to love and care about the people I worked with/learned how to be a true team member/player, and 3) I was able to receive an immeasurable amount of peace and comfort venting to/sharing my experiences with my peers. (Post-survey 27 Nov. 2014)

At the end of the fall 2014 semester a student in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course reflected on how the practice of theatre, content of mental health and aspect of ensemble building shaped her experience of and learning in the course. I was surprised and pleased to discover that the course had impacted her in a variety of ways and that a single area was not privileged over another. I began to wonder what it was about this unique combination of arts, health, and education that made the process and practice of Theatre For Dialogue so powerful for participants.

In this chapter I explore the drama/theatre pedagogy and practices that inform Theatre For Dialogue. Specifically, I will define the key practices of Applied Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed and Theatre in Education, which shaped the development of

Theatre For Dialogue's use in a university setting. I will discuss how campus mental health intersects with undergraduate identities in multiple ways and I will conclude by describing how Hoare's Theatre For Dialogue approach is rooted in a feminist pedagogy and practice.

## APPLIED THEATRE

> Making meaningful theatre should always be a contextually specific, audience-centered, dialectical process that strives to deepen our understanding of the world and ourselves so that we can change those things that diminish our humanity. (Pammenter 83)

Applied Theatre practitioners use the tools of theatre artistry to create an educational understanding with and for communities in order to evoke a positive shift in our neighborhoods that can ripple out into society for betterment of the world. This research study positions Theatre For Dialogue as a practice within the broad field of applied theatre. According to scholar and practitioner, Philip Taylor, applied theatre is an umbrella term used to describe participatory theatre that happens in non-traditional performance settings, that engages communities who do not traditionally create theatre and operates from a principal of transformation (2003). James Thompson, applied practitioner and theorist, states, "it is a practice by, with and for the excluded and marginalized" (xv). Taylor also points out that applied theatre is created by individuals who "are driven by a desire to provide insight, to interrogate understandings of community, and to contemplate notions of the better, the just" (3). Helen Nicholson, applied theatre practitioner and scholar, notes in her book, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre*, how applied theatre engages with a focus of "intentionality- specifically an

aspiration to use drama to improve the lives of individuals and create better societies" (3). Scholar Dani Snyder-Young suggests that applied theatre "operates as dialogue- an artist or team of artists with expertise in theatre-making collaborate with participants and/or audiences with expertise in their own experiences, lives and concerns to create theatrical events" (4). In other words, applied theatre and artists work with a variety of populations to use theatre as a tool to incite dialogue and education around a variety of issues important to each particular population; the process is driven by the intention of its participants. The end product can range from a performance to an installation, and is shared with the hope of creating an awareness that inspire individuals to take action steps in their community and world towards social change.

Scholar Tim Prentki furthers this characterization in an introductory chapter on the poetics of representation in his book, *The Applied Theatre Reader*, which states: "Typically with applied theatre practices there is a strong, intentional relationship between the manner in which the piece is created and the idea or picture of the audience for whom it is created" (19). Most applied theatre work begins with a guided question or topic and is created through a form of collaborative art making called devising. Devised theatre is a process of creating and making original theatre performances that pulls from the participants' lived experiences, originates from an idea or source material, and supports spontaneity (Oddey 1994). It is "theatre made *with* a community, theatre made *by* a community, and theatre made *for* a community" (Snyder-Young 5). For this research project I used Hoare's Theatre For Dialogue methodology to engage participants in a constructivist classroom where they generated performative material around the content

of campus mental health through the process of improvisation, storytelling and image work. The undergraduate students in the course created a performance for their community by engaging in a critical reflective praxis around the content of mental health with their classmates and community experts.

## THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED (TO)

> TO actively coincided with the emergence, in the late 1990's, of the term 'applied theatre', that was increasingly used to describe a wide range of participatory, socially engaged often politically inspired, non-traditional theatre practices. This coincidence was so marked and the association between TO and applied theatre so strong, that in some quarters the terms have become almost synonymous: certainly, many so-called applied theatre practices seem to rely almost entirely on games, techniques and strategies drawn from the TO 'arsenal.' (Vine 61)

As a form of applied theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed's strategies and techniques are often interwoven into the practice of many other applied theatre models. In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Brazilian theatre educator and activist Augusto Boal states, "To know and to transform – that is our goal. To transform something, first one must know it" (207). Boal's work is closely tied to that of educational philosopher Paulo Freire. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes the importance of an active dialogic education for learners rather than a "banking" method, where the teachers deposit their knowledge onto students. A dialogic approach helps learners become active agents in the learning process. Once the oppressed individual becomes educated they can begin to transform the world around them (21). Boal, who agrees with Freire's theories, uses the theatrical TO model to spread education and evoke social change. Theatre of the Oppressed is a collection of theatrical techniques that aim to generate dialogue in

community-based settings around systems of oppression and educate individuals in hopes of inciting a positive transformation. In *Rainbow of Desire,* Boal describes TO as:

> A system of physical exercises, aesthetic games, image techniques and special improvisations whose goal is to safeguard, develop and reshape this human vocation, by turning the practice of theatre into an effective tool for the comprehension of social and personal problems and search for their solutions. (14)

TO applications are utilized within community-based settings as a tool to incite discussion and dialogue with the hopeful outcome of evoking social change through audience empowerment and education.

The most widely used form of TO is Forum Theatre, wherein participants collaboratively devise short scenes that showcase moments of oppression and perform the scenes up until the moment the protagonist (the oppressed individual) encounters defeat. Members of the audience are then invited to come on stage and replace the protagonist and physically act out their own 'solution' to the scenario (Boal, *Games* 240-245). A figure known as the 'Joker' is the link between the audience and the performers acting (Boal, *Games* xxiv). The person in the role of the Joker is there to activate, guide, and facilitate audience dialogue and participation during a performance; they assist in asking questions and providing the rules for replacements. The audience member or spectator, who replaces the protagonist and attempts to create a new solution, is known in TO as a spect-actor (Boal, *Games* 244). In Forum Theatre, there is no perfect solution to the oppression but rather an opportunity for communities to collaboratively and actively engage in dialogue around rehearsals for real life action. Audience members leave a performance having rehearsed alternative 'solutions' to try out in real-life situations when

they arise. “The real goal of the arsenal of the Theatre of the Oppressed is to contribute to the preparation for the future rather than waiting for it to happen” (Boal, *Rainbow* 185). The ultimate goal of TO and its related practices is to assist individuals in becoming agents of social change both in their oppression and in the oppression of others.

### THEATRE IN EDUCATION (TIE)

In her MFA Thesis, *Considering the Form: Fundamental Factors in Devising for Theatre-in-Education*, practitioner Lynn Hoare defines TIE as a combination of “theatrical elements with interactive moments in which audience participants (in or out of role) work with actor-teachers towards an educational or social goal, using the tools of theatre in service of this goal” (12). Nicholson notes that this work “involves professional theatre-makers working with young people in all kinds of educational settings and learning environments, including schools, hospitals, theaters, museums and heritage sites” (*Applied* 86). Originating from Britain in the mid-1960’s, TIE focuses on creating methods of combining theatre and educational goals. “TIE companies have always been among the most socially conscious of theatre groups, consistently choosing to examine issues they believe to be of direct relevance to the lives of the children with whom they work” (Jackson, *Learning* 27). Theatre-in-education seeks to educate young people in issues that are relevant to both them and their communities.

Addressing the “educational objectives chosen for a specific target population” (Hoare, *Considering* 30) is a fundamental factor in the creation of new TIE pieces for

specific communities. In, *Learning Through Theatre: The Changing Face of Theatre in Education,* Anthony Jackson and Chris Vine maintain that:

> TIE seeks to harness the techniques and imaginative potency of theatre in the service of education. The aim is to provide an experience for young people (and, increasingly, adult populations) that will be intensely absorbing, challenging, often provocative, and an unrivalled stimulus for further investigation of the chosen subject in and out of school. (5)

TIE aims to educate communities through the use of interactive theatre techniques that provide audience members with the opportunity to be an active participant in the learning process. Unlike TO, which is traditionally used with and for adult participants and audiences, TIE projects primarily focus on youth populations but also involve participants of all ages.

In a TIE performance, it is the role of a facilitator, often held by a teaching artist/actor, which serves as the link between the audience and performers. The role of the facilitator can be rotated throughout the performance between teaching artist/actors or one person can facilitate the entire performance. The facilitator, like a performer, is aware of specific timing cues that occur throughout the performance in which the facilitator stops the performative action and engages the audience in discussions and reflections around the program content (Hoare, *Considering* 20). The facilitator must be prepared to engage with a wide range of organic and unplanned responses supplied by the audience members.

Unlike TIE's fluid facilitator role that can be shared among performers during a performance, the facilitator in a TO forum theatre piece, the Joker, is played by one individual throughout the entire performance. Forum theatre performances do not have

built in or specifically selected moments of dialogue but rather invite the audience to decide when they want to stop the performance and engage in discussion. Both TIE and TO require the facilitator/Joker to improvise the dialogue exchanges with the audience throughout the performance.

Both the TIE and TO models provide opportunities for audience members to rehearse language and action for change but TIE incorporates a multitude of methods and strategies into the process in order to meet its main objective with each community. TO practitioners typically follow Boal's forum theatre model while TIE practitioners use a larger dramatic frame and position the audience within the action to achieve educational objectives.

**THEATRE FOR DIALOGUE (TFD)**

Participatory theatre, theatre of the oppressed, theatre for civic practice, theatre-in-education, interactive theatre, community-based theatre, experimental theatre and applied theatre are terms commonly used to describe non-traditional theatre formats in which the audience plays an active role. At UT Austin, Theatre For Dialogue Specialist Lynn Hoare believes that "the way we call something has everything to do with who comes to the table to participate and who feels as though they have access" (Personal Interview 26 Feb. 2015). Theatre For Dialogue provides the UT Austin student community with a name that they can recognize, connect to and understand. Hoare aims to provide students with a clear understanding that TFD performances offer a safe space to engage in difficult dialogues on topics that often are not openly discussed.

VAV's Theatre For Dialogue seeks to engage undergraduate students in a dialogical exchange around issues of consent, sexual assault and healthy/unhealthy relationship behaviors. As a form of applied theatre TFD creates a space for participants to engage in difficult dialogues, confront assumptions, and gain a better understanding around an issue through the use of theatrical tools (Hoare, "Challenging" 143). Theatre For Dialogue performances explore the intersection between theatre and education as a way to investigate, reflect, provoke dialogue and serve as a rehearsal for reality.

VAV's interactive theatre model for university students originally used an adapted version of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, but in 2006 a change in the leadership of VAV's program specialist ultimately created a shift in the theatrical styles and methods which resulted in the birth of the term "Theatre For Dialogue" on UT Austin's campus. TFD shares the same objectives, theories and techniques under the applied theatre umbrella as TIE although many of the TO theatrical techniques are used in the research, devising and developmental process of new performance pieces. Figure 1 below is a visual representation of how Theatre For Dialogue sits in relationship to the TO and the TIE models.

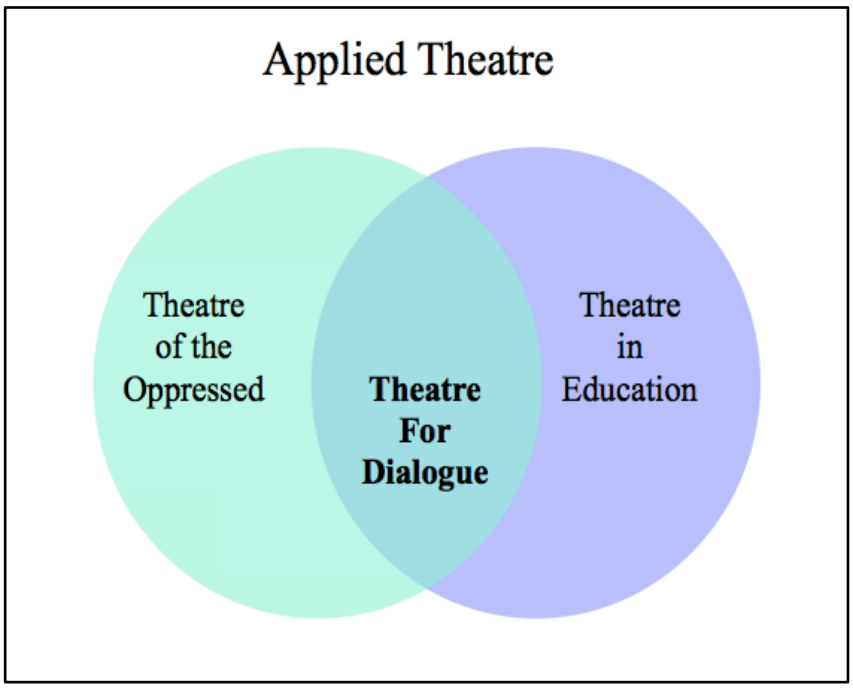


Figure 1: Theatre For Dialogue's Intersection of TO and TIE

Similar to TO and TIE, TFD aims to create education and social change within the lives and communities of its audiences through interactive theatre performances. TFD creates and devises performances using the TIE process and aims to establish a connection between audiences and characters, so that audience members will want to evoke change in the scenes. This can be done by offering responses to questions from the characters when they seek assistance or physically getting on stage and playing out a role-play moment. In TFD the link between the audience and the performers is known as the actor-facilitator, whereas TO refers to the role as the "Joker" and TIE, the actor-

teacher. The actor-facilitator, as in both TO and TIE, relies heavily on questioning as a medium to engage audiences in dialogue.

Much like how Boal's Forum Theatre originated out of his previous form called "simultaneous dramaturgy," Theatre For Dialogue comes from an adapted format of both TO and TIE to meet the needs of the target audience. In my research project I combined the content of campus mental health with the TFD model based on the prior knowledge and experiences of personally engaging in dialogue with undergraduates through a model that has been adapted to create campus community change.

## MENTAL HEALTH ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

At UT Austin currently enrolled students are provided with affordable options and access to mental health services and providers through the Counseling and Mental Health Center located on the fifth floor of the Services for Students Building. Here students can utilize private or group counseling, psychiatric services, and the MindBody Lab.[1] In the *Counseling and Mental Health Center Facts 2013-2014*, CMHC reported that UT Austin's clinicians saw 5,265 student clients over the year, while in 2009-2010 the reported number was 3,900, which means that in the past five years there has been a 35% increase in the number of students using the campus services. In *The College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What to Do About It*, authors Richard Kadison and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo claim that our campus is not alone in this rise:

[1] CMHC's MindBody Lab is a dimly lit room where students can go to re-center and de-stress. While relaxing in recliners, students have access to audio that guides them through breathing exercises, meditation, guided imagery and relaxation sounds ("CMHC").

> That despite this appearance of comfortable status, secure environment, and a pleasant social world, a multitude of hidden problems have caused a steady and alarming rise in the severity of students' mental health problems across the nation in colleges and universities large and small, public and private. (5)

I cannot help but wonder if conversations around mental health, campus resources and support became normalized if there would be a continued increase in student-scheduled visits and eventually a decline in crisis or day-of appointments?

Kadison and Foy DiGeronimo describe the lack of dialogue around campus mental health as "the elephant in the room no one is talking about" and urge us to start (1). Kadison, who is the chief of the Mental Health Services at Harvard University Health Services, has noticed a coinciding increase in the pressures and expectations on college students alongside the rise in student struggle with mental health issues (1). Transitioning to college life, identity development, relationships, academic pressures, juggling extracurricular activities, family expectations and cultural differences are stressors that can aid in an undergraduate struggle with mental health (Kadison & Foy DiGeronimo). A student's internal process is as individual as their identity: "The inability to make the transition to independent living had less to do with the university and more to do with the internal process of change, ranging from mild stress caused by fear of the unknown to the first episode of a more serious problem such as depression" (7). Incoming students take on more than just starting a new school or program when they relocate to start their college careers.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one out of four people are affected by mental health, and usually by the age of 24 ("NAMI"); in other words, mental

health is an issue that affects us all. An issue that is affecting everyone in the community needs to be talked about. In my research project I attempt to follow Kadison and Foy DiGeronimo's recommendation to talk about the content of mental health "without lecturing, dictating, judging or criticizing" through the use of a participatory theatre process (191). Theatre For Dialogue's participatory theatre process invites audiences to engage in discussions around campus mental health issues without the invitation to share specific or personal experiences but rather to focus on the characters in the piece. The role of the actor-facilitator in a TFD performance is to engage and guide the audiences through the theatrical experience and a community-based dialogical exchange. The actor-facilitator relies heavily on the ability to listen to how the audience is reacting and to help guide the conversation and performance forward without ever saying, "you're wrong and we're right." Ideally, a TFD model addresses the content without, as Kadison and Foy DiGeronimo advise, ever "lecturing, dictating, judging or criticizing."

Mental health is such a wide topic and UT Austin's campus is made up of many diverse identities whose experiences and relationships to the content could be varied, so I wondered how our TFD piece could gain insight from the wider population. I decided the students should research UT Austin's current undergraduate population's understanding and perceptions of mental health as a way to gather community voices and input that would help to shape the devising process and ultimately the final product.[2] I was interested to see what areas of the mental health field the undergraduate population

[2] The process used to gather community voices was through the Researching Peers assignment (see Appendix C).

connected to, found oppressive, and questioned. It was a surprise to learn that students could not clearly articulate or define what mental health meant to them with words but could easily offer descriptions of what mental health looks and sounds like. One survey respondent said mental health sounds like, "Tidal waves crashing against an empty shore, a colossal tree slamming against the forest floor, the violent convection of molten magma bellowing deep within the bowels of the planet. No one can really hear it, but it produces sounds that can only be heard or understood by that which experiences it" (Researching Peers Survey A Sep. 2014). Another said, "I actually tend to think of people who aren't mentally healthy" in reference to what mental health looks like (Researching Peers Survey B Sep. 2014). But why is it that only people who have experienced "it," can hear "it"? And what do people who *aren't mentally healthy* look like? These responses indicated that stigma around mental health was present on our campus through these generalizations about who gets to understand what mental health means, sounds and looks like.

## FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

Based on Hoare's TFD model, I created and designed the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course to engage and educate UT Austin students on the content of campus mental health. My hope was that through this dialogic and collaborative theatre form, we could collectively evoke a sense of empowerment and dialogic inquiry, and we could ideally activate social change within the community. I specifically designed the course to employ a critical and feminist pedagogy as a way to

engage students in a learning process that draws from an individual's prior knowledge and lived experiences and relies heavily on the exchange of dialogue.

As discussed in Chapter 1, I employ Carolyn Shrewsbury's theory of feminist pedagogy, which engages students in the learning process and connects the classroom learning environment with issues within the larger community where it is situated and the world (6). Feminist scholars, Frances Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault, also argue that a feminist pedagogy aims to encourage individuals from underrepresented and/or oppressed groups to gain an education that is "relevant to their concerns, to create their own meanings, and to find their own voices in relation to the material" (9).

Feminist pedagogy, like Theatre For Dialogue, calls upon on the use of dialogue to act as an element to incite an exchange of thoughts, opinions and values in community-based settings. Feminist practitioner and social activist bell hooks expands on the idea through the importance of sharing voice in her book *Teaching to Transgress*:

> Hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts, and sometimes associating these voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other. That moment of collective participation and dialogue means that students and professor respect- and here I invoke the root meaning of the word, "to look at" — each other, engage in acts of recognition with one another, and do not just talk to the professor. Sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom helps establish communal commitment to learning. (186)

In the classroom setting, a feminist pedagogue breaks down the traditional hierarchy of teacher/student and learns alongside the students while still creating a space for the learning to happen. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, theorist Paulo Freire recognizes that a learning environment should be a place where, "The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the

students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (61). Together the students and the facilitator engage in a dialogical exchange that provides them with the opportunity to question the society in which they live and to think critically about how to enact change. Together teacher and students engage in the practice of praxis – action and reflection. A feminist classroom environment breaks down the typical hierarchy commonly found in educational settings and rather than working from a place of differences students work from a place of shared commonalities.

The use of dialogue as medium to connect individuals through their commonalities has been a foundational tool utilized by Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal and bell hooks, among many others. hooks' feminist pedagogy lies in conversation with Boal's own pedagogical approach described in his books on Theatre of the Oppressed.[3] Feminist scholar Ann Elizabeth Armstrong agrees that both hooks and Boal's pedagogical practice relies heavily on the use of bringing people together in spaces of dialogue in order to unite them through their shared experiences. Armstrong notes "emotions can be a source of simultaneous empowerment and collective bonding" (181). Empowerment, ensemble and leadership are three key elements that Shrewsbury believes aid in a transformative learning environment and will be used to shape the scope of this document.

In this chapter, I defined the key practices of Applied Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed and Theatre in Education in relation to Theatre For Dialogue and discussed

[3] TO's Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire have a long history of their work being in conversation with each other. Their theories both aim to engage and empower individuals to end oppression by working together.

the literature and practices to support these forms. I argue that Theatre For Dialogue, when joined with the content of campus mental health, has the potential to evoke dialogue, education and social change on UT Austin's campus when facilitated through a feminist pedagogical lens. In the next chapter I will explore how these ideas came together to help build an undergraduate course that supported the students in creating a transformative learning space.

# Chapter 3

> This class is a unique experience in combining research into mental health and using theatre techniques to create dialogue. Students get a hands-on, personal chance at collaboration to create content that is important to them and to other students, and get to be a primary voice in this important conversation that is not being had frequently enough on campus. (Post-survey 27 Nov. 2014)

In the spring semester of 2014 when the idea to run a Theatre For Dialogue course on mental health was in its infant stage, I put out a call to see if there would be any student interest. When Cole, a fourth-year senior at UT Austin, first heard there might be a class that would combine theatre practices with the content of mental health she immediately contacted me to learn more. A week later, as we sat down to talk about her interest and possible role in the project, she could not stop talking about the importance and need for this work on campus. Currently in her last year as an undergraduate, Cole, who lives with diagnosed anxiety and depression, had many personal stories about how both the stigma and truths of living with mental health issues have affected her college career and experience. My meeting with her and other students prior to beginning the course gave me further insight into the struggle that comes with being a full-time undergraduate university student. Students named multiple issues including: transition to university lifestyle, relationships, employment and roommate living situations. I began to wonder if students had self-care practices and how I could model self-care methods in the TFD course.

In this chapter I will examine and detail the process of designing, implementing and sharing our Theatre For Dialogue approach to participatory action research through

the lens of feminist pedagogy. I will use Carol Shrewsbury's feminist pedagogical framework – which emphasizes the importance of empowerment, ensemble and leadership – to analyze and discuss three key parts of my Theatre For Dialogue course: the syllabus design, key assignments, and the final sharing with the larger campus community. I will support my arguments and discussion through key examples pulled from my qualitative thematic analysis of my field notes, students' weekly reflections (see Appendix B) and students' pre- and post- surveys.

Below in Table 1 I list the participant identities. All five of the student participants in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course identified as female and enrolled in their third or fourth year at UT Austin. The ages of the students ranged from 20-21 and the participants identified as coming from Hispanic, white, Mexican and Asian racial and/or ethnic backgrounds. The participants' majors fall into the categories of theatre, health, psychology and education. Some of the students chose to have their real names included in this document while other selected a pseudonym.

Table 1: Identities of Students in the Theatre For Dialogue course[4]

| Name | Age | Gender/Pronoun | Academic Major | Year | Race/Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sophia | 21 | Female/she, her | Psychology Honors (BA) | Fourth | White/Hispanic |
| Jada | 21 | Female/she, her | Theatre & Dance Playwriting | Fourth | Mexican |
| Crimson | 21 | Female/she, her | Theatre & Dance Acting | Third (Final) | White |
| Cole | 20 | Female/she, her | Rhetoric & Writing, Minor in Education | Third (Final) | White |
| Jane | 20 | Female/she, her | Nutrition | Third | Asian |

Throughout, I will argue that a Theatre For Dialogue course has the potential to create a transformative learning experience in a traditional academic setting, due to its ability to create empowerment, ensemble and leadership.

## EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CONTENT AND ARTISTRY

Shrewsbury suggests that a feminist pedagogy strives to create a classroom with a more equal sharing of power between participants in order to provide students a space of empowerment: "Empowering strategies allow students to find their own voices, to discover the power of authenticity. At the same time, they enable individuals to find

[4] Participants characterized their own identities – gender, age, major and race – on a participant intake form at the beginning of the course.

communion with others and to discover ways to act on their understanding" (9). Student empowerment is more likely to occur when the students have the space to engage in a constructivist learning environment that sets them up for success. I argue that in *Theatre for Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health*, student empowerment was facilitated and supported through the content and artistry of the course. The content and artistry of the course was represented through the course syllabus in the structure and goals, community expert visits, and the exploration of participant artistic perspective.

The first class of every new semester at a college or university often begins with the sharing of the course syllabus. For undergraduate and graduate students alike, this is the moment in the semester when instructors provide students with a document that also serves as a class contract. The syllabus outlines the course goals, expectations, and serves as a map for the semester by naming out assignments, due dates, grade value and final exam information. In their article, "Preparing an Effective Syllabus: Current Best Practices," Jeanne Slattery and Janet Carlson support the significant role the syllabus design plays in the course structure:

> A strong syllabus facilitates teaching and learning. It communicates the overall pattern of the course so a course does not feel like disjointed assignments and activities, but instead an organized and meaningful journey. In particular, a good syllabus clarifies the relationship between the goals and assignments. (159)

A discussion around the syllabus provides students an opportunity to explore and understand the scope of the course, to raise questions or concerns and to have expectations named out. For instructors it serves as written contract that can later be

revisited if any situation with a student arises, such as excessive absences or late work; student accountability is made legible through this document.

As an instructor I worked to design my syllabus (see Appendix D) to guide the students through the Theatre For Dialogue course in ways that would empower their relationship to the content, build ensemble and provide them with opportunities to take an active leadership role in the construction of the performance. The structure of the course maintained a course objective but allowed students to offer an active voice in the construction of their learning. As I structured the course I thought about the overarching flow of the semester as a whole and scaffolded the learning and assignments through what scholar Jeffery Wilhelm calls: "show me, help me, let me." This constructivist model is based on developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky's theory that all learning is social and supports the students' learning through a scaffolded, transferable learning process:

- **Show Me** – I model the activity for the students.
- **Help Me** – I am there to assist students.
- **Let Me** – The students engage in and accomplish the work on their own. (24)

The first part of the course was designed to *show* students information on the related content through assigned readings and community experts. Next, the coursed *helped* deepen student understanding through structured engagement in collaborative in-classroom artistic projects that indicated their knowledge of the content and artistry. Students explored the devising process with learned content while the facilitator

remained nearby to provide assistance and feedback as a way to check for student understanding. Finally, the course *lets* or invites participants to demonstrate their understanding through an interactive performance as part of the final performative project.

**Course Structure and Goals**

Based on the successful TFD model at UT Austin, I knew an important end of the semester objective was to have students present an interactive theatre piece to engage their community and peers in dialogue around the content of mental health on UT Austin's campus. From my past experience with Theatre For Dialogue, I knew that time would be an issue in my course design. A one-semester course does not generally provide enough time to research, create, rehearse, pilot and perform a fully realized TFD piece for a campus-wide community audience, particularly when the participants are involved in full-semester course loads, campus organizations and employment. So, I made a decision: our culminating project for the course would be an invitation-only sharing of our episodic work. Merriam-Webster defines episodic as a series of loosely connected parts ("episodic"). For this practice-based research project, episodic meant a collection of scenes, monologues, and interactive theatre moments shared with an invited supportive community of friends and guests.[5] Essentially, the course objective would be to create a first draft of a new TFD performance on campus mental health at UT Austin.

[5] The work created in *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* by the students was later accepted into UT Austin's Cohen New Works Festival 2015. This is where the original collection of pieces was solidified into a more developed performance titled *The Fog Inside*.

With this achievable goal as the objective I mapped out the weekly syllabus structure. According to Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, "Only by having specified the desired results can we focus on the content, methods, and activities most likely to achieve those results" (15). I wondered how I could bring a multitude of identities and experiences on mental health from the wider campus population into the classroom setting so that the students could engage in sharing of community voices, in order to develop a TFD piece aimed specifically at UT's campus community. The devising process would rely on student and campus perspectives as content in order to achieve the course goal. Wiggins and McTighe suggest that curriculum designers should:

> Start with the end (the desired results) and then identify the evidence necessary to determine that the results have been achieved (assessments). With the results and assessments clearly specified, the designer determines the necessary (enabling) knowledge and skill, and only then, the teaching needed to equip students to perform. (338)

Using Wiggins backward design approach I positioned the Researching Peers Project assignment (see Appendix C) and visits from guest instructors closer to the beginning of the semester in order for the students to gain an understanding of campus perspectives on mental health content.[6] This design approach allowed me to create a more accurate timeline in regards to assignments, guest speakers, the devising process, final performance reflection and the outcome of an achievable goal.

In constructing my TFD syllabus I thought about the varying levels of prior knowledge the students entering the course would have, ways to use their talents and

[6] The Researching Peers Project asked students to create an assessment tool that would gather a range of perspectives on mental health from the student body at UT Austin.

practices to hold their personal stories safe. The students in the course represented different backgrounds, identities, and different majors in their undergraduate academic careers. For some students, this meant they had been in classes learning about mental health issues while others attended classes that focused on the use of performance on stage. I wondered how to make this course feel relevant to all of the students while keeping a high level of engagement throughout. And more importantly, how could I create a space for students who struggled with areas on the mental health spectrum[7] feel comfortable enough to participate without feeling as though they have to share their personal stories?

**Community Experts**

A key focus of this research project was to empower the students to become campus peer educators through building their knowledge and expertise in mental health on UT Austin's campus. I was also continually aware of my own positionality when interacting with the topic of mental health. I knew I brought a background and experience in participatory-based theatre, specifically TIE and TFD practices, but I struggled with my own identity as an expert in the field of mental health education. Hoare's TFD model which is used to explore interpersonal violence calls upon expert individuals, based at UT Austin, who are involved in the day-to-day action around the content of interpersonal violence, to guest facilitate sessions and share content with students. As I created the syllabus and execution of the course I knew students needed access to individuals who could share information about UT's mental health education and services.

[7] I use the word "spectrum" to describe the wide range and varying levels of mental health issues.

UT Austin's CMHC offers students a myriad of resources and assistances such as: access to affordable individual and/or group counseling, a 24-hour crisis line, psychiatric services, access to the MindBody Lab and help with access to related off-campus resources ("Our Services"). Services for Students with Disabilities assists students to acquire and navigate accommodations such as permission to: leave or move about in class and audio record class sessions; extend due dates on assignments; provide access to a reduced distraction environment; and allow the use of technological devices in class ("SSD"). Services for Students with Disabilities staff members provide students with the tools to get accommodations without having to tell professors the specifics of their disability. I believe that a downside to this service is that a student's condition must be named out and labeled as a disability in order for the university system to approve their application for an accommodation. Not everyone defines their mental health issue as a disability. I wonder how a student's trust towards campus support systems might be altered when they are told they have a disability if they do not identify their mental health status as a disability.

I decided to invite campus experts from a variety of areas at CMHC and UT Austin campus to work with the class and provide them with a spectrum of mental health education. The goal was for students to make a personal connection to the UT Austin's mental health facilitators, to expand their knowledge of the mental health community and to actively engage in the inquiry presented by each expert facilitator. I invited four guest educators and asked each to facilitate a specific classroom session inquiry on mental health. Campus experts who participated in the course were from CMHC's Mental Health

Promotion, UT Austin's BeVocal Bystander Initiative, CMHC's *Be That One* Suicide Prevention Program and Services for Students with Disabilities. In Table 2 I discuss the order in which each guest visited, their position at UT Austin and the specific inquiry they brought into the larger exploration of mental health.

Table 2: Guest Instructors and Sessions

| **Expert Facilitator** | **Position at UT Austin** | **Key Inquiry** |
|---|---|---|
| Katy Redd | Health Education Coordinator, Mental Health Promotion | What is success? |
| Erin Burrows | VAV Prevention and Outreach Specialist, Co-chair BeVocal Bystander Initiative | What is the role of an active bystander? |
| Marian Trattner | Health Education Coordinator, *Be That One* Suicide Prevention Program | How is suicide a systemic issue? |
| Emily Shryock | Disabilities Service Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities | What do accommodations do for UT students? |

In this next section of my thesis document I will expand on information offered in this table through a short description of each of the four guest facilitators, the key inquiry of their session and how the material shared informed the way the students understood mental health and campus resources.

***What is Success?***

The first guest facilitator to meet with the TFD course was Katy Redd, Health Education Coordinator and Mental Health Promotion Specialist at UT Austin. Katy began her visit with a question: what does it mean to be successful? Next she asked: what does it mean to fail? Many first-year students to a four-year university program arrive with a career path and goals already in their minds. They are ready to declare their major and even envision themselves easily soaring through the next four years and right onto the next step, whatever that might be: a corporate job, medical school or a teaching position. When students realize the reality of the course work is not what they thought it would be or they struggle to pass the course requirements, there can be tension between the reality of what college life is and what the students thought college would be (Kadison & Foy DiGeronimo 15). As the students in the TFD course engaged in conversation around their own definitions of success, failure and the ways that they intersect, the conversation turned toward the idea of success as a forward way of thinking – that success is always in the future and not in the present. Katy noted that a forward way of thinking can make it difficult for students to let go of the path they thought they would be on and be satisfied with the path they are on (Researcher's Field Notes 14 Sept. 2014).

Kadison and DiGeronimo suggest that if a university wants to change the way students view stigma and campus resources then it must employ community outreach and activate the student body in dialogue around mental health education (175). CMHC's model offers UT Austin's students an opportunity to engage in conversations around their

own mental health in a positive way. One of the students in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* reflected on the opportunity to work with Katy:

> Instead of speaking to us, [Katy Redd] spoke with us. It felt as if though we were having a conversation. I also enjoyed how honest she was. She was informed; she knew what was going on. She wasn't on anyone's side. Just because she works for the university, for example, she wasn't afraid to talk to us about the university and its problems. I feel as though her attitude and demeanor really made us feel comfortable enough to speak our minds. (Weekly Reflection 14 Sept. 2014)

Students appreciated Katy's honest approach, knowledge, and dialogue around the content of mental health. Their reflections indicated that instead of being *taught* they felt as though they were invited *to participate* actively in a conversation about campus mental health.

***What is the Role of an Active Bystander?***

Erin Burrows, whose work focuses on outreach and prevention with VAV, also plays an active role in UT Austin's new Bystander Intervention Initiative program called BeVocal. The role of an active bystander in relation to mental health concerns is one of the many issues addressed through the program; therefore, Erin's voice became a vital element to our course, and our process of representing a bystander approach in our performance. BeVocal aims to educate incoming and current students on the power of bystander intervention and currently intersects with over fifteen campus programs promoting the concept that "individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm" ("BeVocal").

After pairing the students off into groups of two Erin asked them to exchange personal stories about a time or situation when they engaged as an active bystander. In

this course I had made a specific choice, as the facilitator, to not ask for personal examples about how the content related to students, but rather provide a space for them to share what they felt comfortable offering. However, when I looked around the room at the groups sharing I could tell the participants were genuinely engaged with each other: "Their bodies sat close to each other, eyes were attentive on the person in front of them and their voices were quiet. When it is time to regroup, I noticed the tone of the air felt more serious and compassionate" (Researcher's Field Notes 21 Sept. 2014). Later in her weekly reflection a participant described how the story sharing made an impact on her, "When we got into pairs and shared our bystander stories it was extremely effective. Just the opportunity to communicate our life experiences put the information being given to us into application, as well as bonded us as a community" (Weekly Reflection 21 Sept. 2014).

BeVocal promotes a slogan that encourages UT Austin students to "say or do something" when they "see something" as a way to promote bystander interventions.[8] One of the participants afterwards noted how important it is to speak up when you see something that seems out of place but also commented on how the reasons to intervene can be difficult to spot:

> I realized how many reasons there were to remain quiet and how few reasons there were to say something. The reasons there were to say something, however, were important and persuasive reasons. (Weekly Reflection 21 Sept. 2014)

[8] Incoming freshmen at UT Austin are required to watch a BeVocal Bystander Intervention video that promotes the catch phrase, "I saw something, I said something, at UT we take care of each other" ("BeVocal").

Knowing how and when to intervene into another person's life can be difficult and feel unnatural. Erin's visit helped students to think critically about whether they had been active bystanders in their past, why bystanders are an important role in the community and how speaking up has the ability to create positive change at UT Austin.

***How is Suicide a Systemic Issue?***

In *College of the Overwhelmed*, Kadison and Foy DiGeronimo establish the need for further dialogue about the topic of suicide on college campuses. Kadison and Foy DiGeronimo state that one in twelve U.S. college students has made a suicide plan (147). Marian Trattner serves as the Health Education Coordinator for UT Austin's *Be That On*e Suicide Prevention Program. Marian engages students in conversation around the subject of campus suicide- a leading cause of death amongst college students. In 2014 half of the students who took a workshop with *Be That One* reported they had never previously received information from the university about suicide prevention ("CMHC Facts"). [9]

Prior to Marian's visit, I felt anxious: had I done enough to prepare the students for a session on suicide? Would someone be triggered by this topic and was there a way to discuss suicide so that students could be supported to make *productive* personal connections? Marian led a conversation about how different societal levels – individual, interpersonal, community and policy – might affect an individual's relationship to thoughts of suicide. Participants found this approach to be a really effective learning model, "It's interesting looking at what could cause those thoughts to emerge on all

[9] Survey results in 2013 state that 42% had never received information on suicide prevention. In 2012, 49% and 2011, 51% ("CMHC Facts").

different levels" (Weekly Reflection 21 Sept. 2014). In their reflections, they also questioned the differences between, "doing an exercise on brainstorming WHY people might be influenced into committing suicide" versus providing resources and how to interact or support when one sees warning signs (Weekly Reflection 21 Sept. 2014). The students actively wondered what was an appropriate intervention approach; how do they help when there is already a situation?

Later, through a Weekly Reflection I learned that a participant had been recovering from a current loss to suicide.

> I'm still pretty traumatized from reading a Facebook status from a guy in my small artist community in Deep Ellum, Dallas, where he took his life shortly after posting a status. It was a pretty scary status to read- the status of him while others went to find him, take him to the hospital, and then announcement that he had passed. Scary stuff. I also have mixed feelings about suicide. I know it's not applicable to our course, but I feel like there's a gray area when severe illness is a factor. (Weekly Reflection 21 Sept. 2014)

Participants noticed a gap in the education around the content of suicide and the role that social media has begun to play in connection to the action of someone taking their own life. It seemed as though they still had many unanswered questions about how to be an active bystander and not all of the students had made the connection to how suicide was tied to our performance piece on campus mental health education.

***What do Accommodations do for UT Students?***

If a student has mental health issues, such as anxiety, and struggles to get work turned-in on time, they can apply for an extended due date accommodation with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). This is just one example of how the office of SSD, where Emily Shryock, Disabilities Service Coordinator, can provide students with

assistance on campus. As Emily talked with the class about what health issues fall under the wide umbrella term of disabilities and the differences between access and success, her yellow lab sat beside her wheelchair. For the students this offered them an opportunity to connect with an individual who openly acknowledges her need for wheelchair access or 'accommodation' in her daily world. Accommodations cover a wide range based on the needs of each individual: a university student who battles high anxiety might need an extension on papers.

Through the dialogue, students gained an understanding of how the accommodation system through the SSD facilitates equal access to education for all of the students at UT Austin through special services offered to select individuals with specialized needs.

> I had never thought about difference between [being given] access and [being given] success. The Students with Disabilities Office provides students with services that are not meant to ensure success but equip students with what they need for success. They are not getting special treatment; they are getting what they need and deserve. (Weekly Reflection 28 Sept. 2014)

As a result of Emily's visit the participants began to understand how the services provided by the SSD focus on creating equal access to education for all of the students at UT Austin.

The objective of the expert-facilitated sessions was to provide the students with a wider education and understanding around the content surrounding mental health on the UT Austin campus. The sessions offered students an opportunity to become familiar with a variety of campus programs, to meet and engage in dialogue with the people associated with the campus programs, to learn how the intersection of community partnerships can

assist the UT Austin campus community and to consider their new understanding through weekly reflective journal entries. Through a narrative thematic coding of students' reflection from each of these weeks, it was evident that the expert facilitated sessions helped students to think critically about their relationship to the content; they gained an understanding of the campus perspectives; and, they began to think systemically about why the current status of mental health issues exist. Table 3, below, links the expert facilitator, the their key inquiry and alongside phrases that represent student reflection on each session.

Table 3: Guest Instructors, Sessions and Student Discovery

| **Expert Facilitator** | **Position at UT Austin** | **Key Inquiry** | **Example Student Reflection** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Katy Redd | Health Education Coordinator, Mental Health Promotion | What is success? | "Mental health is a lot more present than I realized"<br><br>"opened up my views on mental health"<br><br>"gave me insight on what our college campus is doing in order to help students" |
| Erin Burrows | VAV Prevention and Outreach Specialist, Co-chair BeVocal Bystander Initiative | What is the role of an active bystander? | "made me realize the power I have to make a difference"<br><br>"there are so many reasons people don't do anything" |
| Marian Trattner | Health Education Coordinator, *Be That One* Suicide Prevention Program | How is suicide a systemic issue? | "people are influenced/affected by factors"<br><br>"why students are reluctant to reach out for help" |
| Emily Shryock | Disabilities Service Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities | What do accommodations do for UT students? | "many things are considered a 'disability' that I wasn't aware of"<br><br>"Privacy exists for students!" |

**Creating and Exploring Artist Perspective as Empowerment**

In *Radical Acts: Theatre and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*, feminist pedagogue Deb Margolin is quoted saying in an interview, "When it comes to getting creative work done, I think the most efficient way is to encourage students, and to bring them to a consciousness of their own beauty, of their own ideation, of their own processes, of their own agency" (qtd in Armstrong and Juhl 121).[10]

In their book, *The Reflexive Teaching Artist*, practitioners Kathryn Dawson and Daniel Kelin define artistic perspective as:

> The characteristics of an artist: the technical skills of creating art; the dispositions and habits that form and inform personal artistry; and the ways in which the artist perceives the purpose, practice and impact of her work and the work of other artists. Artistic perspective embodies an artist's propensity to observe, engage with, analyze, interpret and express opinion about the world around him. (125)

A student's ability to call upon their artistic skills and cultivate an artistic aesthetic will aid them in the devising process. I wanted the students in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course to identify their own artistic perspective and put those skills to practice in our collective devising process. An artistic perspective combines the elements of artwork, artistry and aesthetic perception. Dawson and Kelin argue that when a group collectively develops a language and process for artistic perspective they gain a larger sense of ownership within the creative learning process. I wondered how to create a space for the students to engage in their artistic perspectives and feel empowered to make artistic choices for the performative piece as a collective.

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[10] *Collapsible Boundaries: Pedagogy For A Theatre of Desire. An interview with Deb Margolin* by Lisa Jo Epstein is part of the anthology *Radical Acts*

The Theatre For Dialogue approach, developed by Lynn Hoare at UT Austin, uses a ½ day retreat as structured time focused on the empowerment of the students as artists. The retreat is designed to help students understand how and why artists use specific aesthetic skills and choices in their practice and to support the identification of their own artistic perspective. I decided to use the retreat model in my course, so I brought the students together for a half-day intensive workshop on a weekend day outside of scheduled class hours. Our retreat aimed to serve as a space for the students to engage in ensemble building, to encourage student artistic perspective and to evoke dialogue around the content of campus mental health. I will discuss the participants' experience of the retreat through a brief description of the retreat environment, the use of ensemble games and an 8-count movement activity.

***Intentionality of Environment***

When the students entered the room, on the day of the scheduled retreat, they entered an explicitly designed space and place: music from the 1920's played softly, the lighting provided a warm glow, an assortment of snacks lay on small decorative plates with cloth napkins on top of vintage table cloths. I strove to create an atmosphere, which indicated to the students that I valued their work and commitment to the course, as well as inspire them to play in the space. I described my observation of the impact of these choices on participants in my field notes from the day:

> One of the participants entered the room with a djembe in one hand and guitar in the other. She took a few steps through the door and paused. As she looked around with wide eyes, a giant smile appeared on her face, which mirrored my own. Finally she said, 'I don't know, something just made me really want to bring

> these instruments so I did and I have no idea if or how we'll use them. But I followed an impulse.' (Researcher's Field Notes 27 Sept. 2014).

The participant's statement that she was "following an impulse" suggested to me that she was already engaging with her artistic perspective and thinking about how to connect the content of mental health to artistic representational forms.

***Activating Artistic Exploration***

In their unpublished book, *Drama-Based Pedagogy: Activating Learning through Art,* authors Kathryn Dawson and Bridget Lee suggest that activities that "focus on creating an ensemble among participants through physical and group play" can improve the learning culture of a classroom (5). Activities played throughout the day helped to encourage a growing confidence and capacity for trust, risk-taking and expression amongst the ensemble. An hour into the retreat the ensemble played a version of Zip, Zap, Zop – called Snaps (Rhod 22). In this theatre activity the energy is passed from one person to the other through the catching (accepting) and passing (gifting) of energy through a snap of the fingers.[11] Students passed snaps back and forth across the circle but as time extended on, they began to take more risks and create new ways to pass and accept the snap.

> The students started suddenly using two snaps at once or handing them out to everyone in the circle, a variation that I had never seen before. People started moving from their place in the circle and make physical contact/interactions with other people in the room. At one point someone shot their two snaps into the sky and everyone slowly caught two each… it was as though stars were falling on all of us. We caught falling stars. I watched as one student suddenly got on one knee and used the snap in the form of a proposal position and the other student took a

[11] Participants accept and gift a snap resulting in two snaps per turn.

moment and then nodded yes. When she accepted the snap the entire group started applauding. (Researcher's Field Notes 27 Nov 2014)

The retreat space provided students with extra time to explore the activity of Snaps on a deeper level; it gave them time to artistically explore and collaboratively discover a key element of performance – the give and take (gift and accept) of energy on stage.

***Artistic Ensemble through Movement***

University professor and practitioner Michael Rohd, states that, "education is dialogue" and while Theatre For Dialogue emphasizes the tools of a dialogical exchange, between participants themselves and participants with audience members, TFD also pulls techniques from Boal's Image Theatre (xvii). Image Theatre is a series of non-verbal exercises where participants engage in a movement-based practice to express realistic or abstract images using their own bodies. This can be done either solo or in relation to another individual (Boal, *Games*). In a TFD performance image work is often used to create a variety of entry points into the content so that audience members may connect the content of the piece to their own personal experiences. For the undergraduate course, *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health*, I chose to facilitate what Hoare refers to as an 8-Count Movement exercise[12] within the environment of the retreat. Movement can help to create an understanding around the assumptions of mental health content in relation to self and audience members (Kerrigan 62-66). Through the use of our bodies as physical images and a sequence of movements I guided the students

[12] In *TFD: Exploring Interpersonal Violence* classes the 8-count movement is applied to the content of rape culture and showcases how individuals protect themselves in their daily routines.

through the exercise to create awareness toward shared commonalities in relation to life stressors. The choice to activate this activity at the retreat situated the participants in an environmental setting that had helped them to develop closer connections to the ensemble and would result in a space where participants felt safer to explore their artistic identities.

The image work sequence was used to explore the content of daily stressors in the world of undergraduate students and how the content of mental health affects us all, not just those diagnosed with a mental health condition. In dance, choreographers use an eight-count rhythm as the base tempo for their practice. In this adaptation of the exercise the eight-count tempo was applied to an everyday gesture or movement sequence – such as typing on the computer. As it was the first time the students were asked to individually create and share performative moments with each other, I purposely structured the steps of the image exercise in a lower-to-higher risk order to support students with a range of experience in an embodied practice.

To start, students brainstormed a list of personal stressors[13] they encounter in their daily routines. They then selected a few stressors and created gestures to exemplify each stressor. With their backs turned towards the inside of a standing circle each student then created gestures for each stressor. Students then selected one gesture and continued to rehearse the movement to the count of 8 beats. In groups of three the students worked collaboratively to teach each other the movements they created. Together the students then decided on the order of their individual movement pieces as they placed them together to create one long three-part 8-count movement sequence. In unison the students

[13] Our group defined stressors as elements that can cause or bring about moments of stress in our lives.

then performed the new movement piece together in a repetitive loop cycle alongside the other students, who performed their own movement sequence.

I observed the students as they started as individuals with a bit of hesitation and shifted into a collaborative unit engaging in an artistic expressive form around the content of mental health.

> The participants showed signs of being embarrassed and nervous as they worked on their gestures individually, but when they worked with others they started to become more confident in the specificity of their movements. When the group rehearsed all together I noticed some of the students trying to avoid eye contact, shaking their heads or nervously laughing when they missed a move. I randomly selected an instrumental version of a song to try the movement with and as soon as the music came on and the participants started performing their movements something just clicked. They felt it. I felt it. It sent chills down my arms and legs. They started playing with their movement sequences like they had done with the snaps – taking ownership in how they moved through the space. When the music stopped all of the participants offered suggestions on how we could aesthetically shift different moments in the formation to enhance the performance as an ensemble. (Field Notes 27 Sept. 2014)

The addition of instrumental music with a clear eight-beat count had helped students to engage more with play in their movements. A participant later commented on this moment: "I felt as though creativity and I had become one, especially after the music started playing!" (Weekly Reflection Sept. 28). Another participant, who openly identified as a non-performer described how the specific structure of the activity supported her artistic development process in her weekly reflection:

> Even though I wasn't very confident in my 8-count piece at first, the more I worked with it, the better I felt about it. It was very rewarding to see it mold into my group's piece which later morphed into both group's piece. With each run through, my piece was tweaked and refined, and I became very proud of it. I also became more comfortable and confident with my acting, even with my slip ups. (Weekly Reflection 28 Sept. 2014)

As an ensemble the students engaged in a sharing of artistic perspectives. The students exchanged their artistic creations around the content of mental health stressors with each other through embodied movements. As a collective the students worked together to collaborate and develop a performative piece they were proud to share out. One participant commented on the process of sharing a stressor with the ensemble:

> When we were going through our stressors I felt nervous. I knew the stressor that has me most stressed out is also the stressor I share the least with the people around me. So I picked a different one, up until the moment we started moving. Then, I knew that if I was going to get what I wanted out of the exercise, I'd have to be vulnerable, so I did it. I'm glad I did. When I shared my movement for the first time, it was sort of painful. However, after sharing with my group, I felt so loved and accepted in the space. It still felt hard, but the more we did it, the more I felt like I had the power over it rather than it having the power over me. It was an important moment for me. (Weekly Reflection 28 Sept. 2014)

This devising activity allowed the students to begin to create an artistic ensemble as they identified their own commonalities amongst each other in the classroom setting around the content of mental health and student lives. They had started to question why they chose their specific stressors, they thought artistically about how to perform out a stressor in 8-counts through the use of their bodies and they worked as an ensemble to create an aesthetically artistic performative piece.

A participant later reflected on the element of time in her weekly reflection about the experience of the retreat:

> I really like how we had more time! The retreat was a great idea. It gave us time to bond, play, and create a theatre piece. Based on today, I know (1) we appreciate and are inspired by each other, (2) we are excited for the future, (3) and a change/shift in understanding has occurred. After the retreat, I can firmly say that while I do not know my peers completely, I definitely do know them. The retreat truly brought us closer together. (Weekly Reflection 28 Sept. 2014)

The retreat provided students with an opportunity to learn more about each other, to develop an appreciation for each other and to cultivate an excitement for future artistic work as a collective.

**ENSEMBLE THROUGH EXCHANGE**

Educator Jeffery Wilhelm uses Vygotsky's theory of *intersubjectivity* and Bakhtin's *interillumination* "to describe how learning only occurs through 'dialogue' that allows for two consciousnesses to inform and shape each other" (25). In other words, learning is social and happens when people are actively engaged in dialogic meaning-making with one another. In a TFD performance the exchange of dialogue and learning occurs between the performers and the audience, in the TFD classroom it occurs between the facilitator and the students as well as student-to-student and student-to-facilitator. For this section of the document I will focus on how structured strategies in the TFD course aid in building ensemble through the student-to-student learning process.

According to Shrewsbury, "At the core of a feminist pedagogy is a re-imagining of the classroom as a community of learners where there is both autonomy of self and mutuality with others that is congruent with the developmental needs of both women and men" (10). In a Theatre For Dialogue course the classroom of learners work together to create an ensemble. In his article, "Acting Together: Ensemble as a Democratic Process in Art and Life," scholar Jonothan Neelands acknowledges that the integration of theatre arts into the classroom setting helps to bring the unfamiliar content into a place of a learned engaged practice, while simultaneously engaging students in a process of ensemble making: "A way of modeling how through collective artistry, negotiation,

contracting of behavior and skillful leading, the ensemble in the classroom might become a model of how to live in the world; a model of 'being with'" (175). For the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course the task design of key assignments and classroom ritual were designed and created to pull on the individual student's prior knowledge as well as actively engage each one in a learning process with peers; this process would simultaneously build classroom ensemble.

**Ritual as Collective Practice**

In *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Interpersonal Violence*, Lynn Hoare begins each class session with a ritual process referred to as a *check-in*. Practitioner Sheila Kerrigan defines rituals as "actions that, through repetition and symbolism, carry more meaning within their social context than the actions alone carry" (55). The check-in invites students to individually share with the class a few sentences about their current status.[14] As a student in Hoare's course, my experience of the check-in process created a patterned order to the structure of each class and helped me connect to the other students. I wondered if the check-in process would also help the students in my TFD course connect to each other on a more personal level through shared commonalities and act as an opportunity for ensemble building.

In the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course I used the check-in process as a way to bring the group together at the beginning of every class and offer a visual transitional cue that class had started. It also aimed to provide the

[14] During a check-in process there is only one person talking at a time. The person speaking shares with the group and the group does not engage the speaker in conversation around what was shared. Each individual ends their turn by saying "checked-in" and then the next person goes and so forth.

students with an opportunity to share thoughts or concerns about class content, ask for support, and reinforce that individuals were involved in a world outside of our classroom walls. The check-in makes "visible that our recent lived experiences impact our readiness to learn" (Dawson & Lee 6). At the start of the semester and throughout I often started the check-in with a simple question for each student to answer: "Something you are most looking forward to this weekend?" As the semester progressed the check-ins became an open space up for students to talk freely about content of their choice.

As the facilitator, I also participated in the check-in process and answered the questions with honesty alongside the students. In *Teaching to Transgress*, feminist pedagogue bell hooks expands on this idea of exposing oneself as a vulnerable learner in the process with your students:

> I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. But most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit. (21)

In one session, I mentioned how I had actively participated in self-care that week and spent time with a friend instead of my work. Later in a participant's weekly reflection she mentioned how what I, as the facilitator, had said made her think about self-care practices in relation to herself:

> It is nice to know that although she is swamped with work, Spring was able to take a break without feeling guilty. This is something I struggle with. I don't feel as though I should be taking breaks. I feel as though I should be constantly moving or constantly doing work. I feel as though I should be doing something

> more productive with my time. This weekend, however, I ran for the first time in months! I ran and it felt amazing. I am glad I followed Spring's example. (Weekly Reflection 26 Oct. 2014)

The participants were influenced by their peers and noted in their weekly reflections about how the exchange of lived moments and stories, through the check-in process, had impacted their own choices. Students also began to find moments of connection with each other. In my Field Notes I mention how a check-in from one participant resulted in a group discussion on the topic of friendlessness:

> [A participant] shared with the group that she genuinely felt as though she was the only person on campus who had no real friendships and claimed it was because when she transferred into UT Austin she wasn't required to take the obligatory incoming freshman courses – which is where she believed everyone else became friends. Because of this she missed out on making friends with the other students in her program and said she feels like an outsider. At the end of class, when everyone was grabbing their items to leave, the conversation turned towards that particular check-in and suddenly all of the students were saying how they felt the same. Instead of leaving the classroom the students stood together in a small huddle sharing their own personal experiences around not having real friends. (Researcher's Field Notes 22 Oct. 2014)

Shrewsbury suggests that a "community of learners is empowered to act responsibly toward one another" (6). The check-in process extended beyond the classroom and students started to think critically about how others in the community might be affected by similar issues. A student later reflected on a moment of connection between her and her classmates and wondered if this feeling might be shared by more individuals at UT Austin and why:

> I found it interesting how many of us feel as if we have "no friends." It makes me wonder how many other people on campus feel this way…Seeing that it's not just me, I wonder if it really is because our campus is so large that it just gets a little more challenging to meet and connect with new people? (Weekly Reflection 26 Oct. 2014)

This comment indicated that the information exchanged in the check-in, at the beginning of the class, stayed with the student throughout the day and had her thinking about how others in the wider campus community might feel about making friends.

In their weekly reflections students were asked to comment on the check-in process for each week. Through an analysis of participants' reflections on the check-in process, four key themes emerged: *self-reflection, ensemble, extension to community*, and *peer influence*. The following definitions capture my understanding of each of these themes as represented by the data set. *Self-reflection* is an experience about self in relation to the check-in process. *Ensemble* is in relation to how the check-in connected to others in the classroom and created classroom ensemble. *Extension to community* is when the check-in process made the participants think beyond the walls of the classroom and about the larger community at UT Austin. Finally, *peer influence* is in relation to when participants directly name out another participant or moment that impacted them; they learned from a specific individual in the room.

When examined the data suggested that the participants experienced these four themes in sequence. At the beginning of the semester the students engaged in a self-reflection process where they placed themselves in relation to the check-in ritual. They began to understand how the check-in process impacted their individual and collective experience in the course and how what they shared could help others learn more about them. Participants then moved into the emerging theme of ensemble where they began to realize the commonalities between the other participants and themselves and began to

create a sense of classroom ensemble. Students then pulled out specific moments from the check-in process that made them feel connected to others or that had influenced them in their own choices outside of class. Lastly, participants extended the check-in model and the content learned through their classroom experience with the check-in process and moved it beyond the classroom walls and into the larger UT Austin community. Figure 2: Participants' Check-in Experience, found below, captures the participants' experience of the check-in process over the thirteen weeks of the semester along with their related codes.[15]

[15] Each of the thirteen weeks was coded through a thematic narrative analysis (see Appendix E).


Figure 2: Participants Check-in Experience

**Individual Artistry as Collective Practice**

In *The Performers Guide to the Collaborative Process* author Shelia Kerrigan encourages the creative process to move forward by picking one idea, any element of an idea and to start playing artistically with it. While planning the course syllabus I was aware that the students' knowledge of campus mental health would expand through the required readings, guest-facilitated visits and classroom dialogue. I wondered how, as a group, we would decide what elements needed to be part of the final performance piece.

Rohd recommends that the facilitator sort "through all the ideas your group tosses out and mak[e] decisions on your feet. If you spend too much time negotiating which direction the scene should take, the process will lose its forward momentum" (106). I decided to construct an assignment where students selected one element from the content learned in the course and paired it with an interactive theatre moment to bring to class as a way to further the process. The Creative Application of Content assignment required students to actively and critically investigate one or more elements that they had learned and apply their artistic perspective to the content.

The Creative Application was a course assignment that occurred during the seventh week of the semester, directly in the middle of our time together. In the assignment students were invited to create a ten-minute performative moment or presentation that would explore content relevant to our piece through an interesting and creative presentational manner e.g., movement, image work, monologue, scene or poem. The syllabus expanded on this assignment through the following directions:

> You will have ten minutes to present a creative moment that could live in this piece. You will come to class ready with a product that you can either teach or perform. This product can be based off of the readings or discussions we've had in class, it can be movement based or fills a gap you think we need in this project. (see Appendix F)

This assignment was designed so that each individual participant in the course could share which specific content they felt was important to share with the campus community and how they imagined elements of theatre and performance might support the specific content message. One participant wrote and performed a monologue, from the

perspective of an undergraduate male, who lives with social anxiety, generalized anxiety and clinical depression:

> Upon entering my first class, I look for a seat. A normal person might walk into a classroom and think 'From where will I be able to see the professor best?' or 'Where are my friends sitting?' I, however, think, 'Where can I sit where no one will notice me?' 'Which seat is the farthest away from everyone else?'
> Basic psychology says that humans are social beings.
> I am not a social being. (Creative Application 12 Oct. 2014)

The student's connection to this particular content is personal as it was loosely based on her partner. The participant also chose to explore this character and his viewpoint from a male perspective because of the lack of male identified bodies in the classroom. I had wondered if the female identified students would notice the lack of a male perspective in the room and wondered what they might suggest we try artistically to incorporate more gender diversity into the performance piece.

> I'm wondering how we can bring a male voice into the performance piece in an authentic way or if it's just not possible without any male identified students in the room? (Researcher's Field Notes 5 Oct. 2014)

In her desire to better understand her boyfriend's experience, this participant often brought her partner's experience and identity into her classwork and class conversations.

Unlike the 8-count movement piece, where the students presented the work out in small groups, this project required that students present out individually for the first time in the course. For those in the room who did not identify as performers and even those that did identify as performers, I called upon a positive feedback method that supported the feminist pedagogical idea that the most efficient way to get creative work done is to encourage the students and help them to understand the positive elements of their

process. It was important to me that the feedback help make the students feel secure in what they shared, so that they could continue to develop and create new work without self-judgment.

As soon as each student had finished sharing their work, the group offered applause and moments of appreciation for the performer by beginning with the statement: "Something I appreciated…" My intention in using this artistic response method was to mitigate the risk for the non=performers in the class and to build a culture of positive support and validation within the ensemble. Practitioner Sheila Kerrigan insists that, "Artists need to feel safe enough to move freely, experience feelings, and express themselves without fear of negative consequences" (87).

Afterwards, a participant reflected on how this assignment and process changed the way she looked at her peers as artists and how the feedback supported the experience:

> The most effective part was viewing and interacting with my peers' presentations. I loved seeing my peers' thoughts in motion. I was able to learn about/hear about mental health illnesses from different perspectives. I also loved how we offered moments of appreciation to those who presented – it felt supportive. (Weekly Reflection 12 Oct. 2014)

As an artistic ensemble the students engaged in the process of a positive exchange.

Participants' data on the check-in ritual and the creative application assignment suggest that they felt empowered to take risks in what they shared with the group during the check-in process and creative application presentations. It also showed that students learned from these moments of exchange and applied the learning into their worlds outside of the classroom setting. The participants had started to engage in a critical

consciousness around the content in relation to themselves, their ensemble and the larger community.

### LEADERSHIP IN PRESENTATION

On Sunday November 23, 2014, the day of the performance sharing, the seats in the audience were filled, the voices had quieted down and the participants had transitioned into their roles as actor/facilitators. Together, the performers stood in a line with their backs towards the audience and the lights went off and the soundscape[16] came up. The black room was suddenly filled with sounds: fingers tapping at computer keys, text and email notifications, ringing of the phone and deep heavy sighs. I stood off to the side with insides that were half filled with nerves and half with disbelief I wondered: how had the ensemble arrived at this moment? How did this group get to a place where they are about to share the performance with an audience?

A feminist pedagogy calls on the students to be active participants in the development of learning so that the development of leadership may occur.

> A feminist pedagogy focuses on the development of leadership. For example, students who take part in developing goals and objectives for a course learn planning and negotiating skills. They also learn how to develop an understanding of, and an ability to articulate their needs. They learn how to find connections between their needs and the needs of others. (Shrewsbury 11)

As an ensemble we would not have been able to arrive at a place of sharing the work with an audience if the students had not taken on roles of individual and collective leadership

[16] A soundscape is a collection of sounds put together to create the feeling of an environment through an audio experience. For this project the soundscape consisted of sounds associated with daily stressors such as: typing of computer keys, buzzing of cell phone, sound of sending a text, "you've got mail" from the computer and the sounds of traffic horns.

throughout the process. In this final section I will explore how the role of leadership was developed in the Theatre For Dialogue course through the negotiation of individual tasks, continued questioning and collective dialogue. I will also address as how a feminist pedagogical approach supported students in their development and creation of the performative content and successful execution of the performance sharing.

**Team Roles**

In her book *Devising Theatre*, Alison Oddey notes that leadership is essential in order to focus a forward sense of direction and to gather and create new work, specifically when creating a TIE piece (105). In the TFD model both the individual and collective leadership of the students helps to forward the ensemble's artistic perspective, research and development process which all culminate in the performance presentation.

In a devising theatre process, ensemble members are often asked to support the creation and development by assisting in varied tasks associated with the project that help achieve the completion of the project; it is a collaborative process. When discussing the collaborative devising process, theatre practitioner Lynn Hoare states:

> Collaboration usually refers to a process in which everyone share responsibility and has an equal voice. Collaboration can also indicate a structure where group members share significant decisions, but have individual responsibilities which are not decided by consensus. (*Considering* 40)

Collaboration in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course required students to engage in the sharing of ideas, talents and continued investigation as individuals and as an ensemble. Oddey notes that the sharing and shaping of a devised performance piece is about each group member making sense of the content

for themselves within the context of the project and then "inventing, adapting and creating what you do as a group" in order to achieve a performative piece (1). In the collaborative process to create and share out a TFD piece on campus mental health, the students in the course needed to work together as an ensemble to collectively assign and complete additional tasks in order to make the performance a reality within the time allotted.

> The assignment for Team Roles was originally listed on the course syllabus as:
>
> Team Roles: You will be assigned to a specific role within the process. These roles will support the work of the ensemble and will be a conversation as we continue to move forward. How do you think your role can help the ensemble and development of this performance piece? Roles might include: stage manager, playwright, tech/design, audience interaction, audience assessment and promotional images. Due dates will range based on positions and will be announced in advance in class. (see Appendix G)

The description allowed room for the students to engage in a conversation later in the semester around possible roles that they would like to take on or that they found important which were not listed in this description; there was room for adaptation. The idea of adaptation provided students with space to think about what elements of content they wanted to explore and felt they could contribute to the overall construction of the piece. Team roles were determined during the seventh week of the semester after the students had a better understanding of both the content and TFD devising structure. It offered the students an opportunity to make an informed decision through the use of their artistic perspectives and knowledge of the content in order to decide which additional tasks they wanted to contribute to the performance product.

Providing students with an opportunity to select their own specific team role allowed them a chance to build a sense of ownership in the work they would contribute to the ensemble and project as a whole. On the day that the students selected their team roles, I first shared a list of options: stage manager (2 positions), playwright, survey specialist, and media design (invitation). The students were reminded that the ensemble's over-arching objective of the team role assignment was to accomplish out of classroom tasks that needed to be completed in order to make the performance a reality. As I handed the list to the students I let them know that if there was something else they would like to do or they thought needed to be done for the success of the ensemble, then it could also be an option. I left the students alone to navigate and negotiate the conversation and positions amongst themselves.

When they made their decisions I asked them to let me know by using their bodies to create a frozen statue of the team role they had selected. One-by-one my colleague and I guessed what they had selected and, to my surprise, they had also selected several tasks not on the list. Jada, who had come into the course interested to explore a role as a playwright had created the role of sound designer. And Crimson, who had expressed much interest in the development of a survey that would capture the intersection of diverse identities and mental health on campus had chosen choreographer over survey specialist.

> I wondered how the students see some of these roles playing out and what product they are going to end up contributing back to the group. But instead of questioning them I decided to trust their instincts and allow the space for their self-discovery to occur. Part of me is excited to see what they come up with artistically. (Researcher's Field Notes 17 Oct. 2014)

Again I am reminded of feminist pedagogue Deb Margolin's approach in empowering the student voice and ideas in order for students to feel confident in creating artistic work (121). Like Margolin, I aim to empower the students to explore the content, expand their artistic perspectives and engage in creative ways to add to the ensemble voice. The TFD model's critical and feminist pedagogy invites participants to take the role of an active leader in both the classroom and in the larger community. In her weekly reflection Jada noted:

> I'm really satisfied with how supported I feel. I also appreciate how our roles turned out. I am one of those people who like to do what I can, wherever I can. So seeing that Cole wanted to do playwright and Crimson wanting choreo, and so on, it really put me in this state of mind of 'what else about myself can I put into this project.' It's great to see everyone so excited about what they are doing. (Weekly Reflection 19 Oct. 2014)

Jada allowed Cole the chance to explore the role of playwright while letting the openness of Crimson's choice expand her own thinking to how she could apply her artistic perspective to the project.

The team roles selected by the students each required a different timeline for completion but the overall timeline for the group was before our performance. Weekly check-ins allowed me to follow the current status of the tasks and the group objective as to create student accountability. Table 4, Team Role and Completed Tasks, shows the task each student signed up for and how the completed project or task added to the ensemble as a whole.

Table 4: Team Role and Completed Tasks

| Student | Team Role Selected | Completed Tasks |
|---|---|---|
| Cole | Playwright | Updated script with new content such as current monologue versions, stats and format |
| Jada | Sound Designer | Recorded vocal lines for audio tracks, created playlists for pre- and post- show music, and soundscape |
| Sophia | Stage Manager | Gathered information on campus resources, created posters of resources in addition to traditional stage manager duties such as organizational details and placement of set up for show |
| Crimson | Choreographer | Created an interactive performative element in the piece around statistics of queer and diverse identities in relation to mental health. |
| Jane | Media | Created visual design with logo for the performance along with invitations and social media |

Crimson later told me that she had dreamed of playing with choreography because she had the option to choose any team role and thought choreography sounded fun. After a while she started to realize that choreography was not the best way she could actually

contribute to the piece (Researcher's Field Notes 25 Nov. 2014). Instead Crimson arrived to class with a performative piece she devised out of statistics on mental health and identities.[17] She had taken initiative and found another way to contribute to the ensemble performative piece that incorporated her own interests and artistic perspective. I wondered if she had taken on a role that was essential to the success of the ensemble performance, would she have completed the tasks required for the role or would she have also decided to arrive with another product. Would she have completed the tasks of the role or switched when she felt stressed or bored by the "lack of fun" the role offered her?

Jada's devised soundscape contribution became the opening number for the show. After the performance Jada reflected on her work on the soundscapes in her weekly reflection:

> After the show, if felt amazing to have so many people so interested in the conversation we were starting. I felt so much ownership, and dare I say pride, over my experience and contribution to this piece. I received many compliments on the soundscape I created. It felt incredible to know I had worked so hard on something and it worked in the piece. (Weekly Reflection 23 Nov. 2014)

Jada had taken a chance and incorporated her artistic interest of music and sound with the content of mental health in order to further the development of the ensemble performance. Her reflection indicates that when her work was openly acknowledged and valued by the community she discovered a sense of pride within herself about the contribution and artistic choice.

Not all of the students created new work to offer and support the ensemble in the final performance piece but Jada and Crimson both added performative elements to the

[17] Crimson's statistics had a main focus on mental health and African American and Queer identities

ensemble that evoked a shift in the construction of the script design and interactive moments for future audiences. Participants engaged in the construction of leadership and activated their artistic perspectives, as individuals and an ensemble. This assignment was situated towards the end of the semester when students are most stretched for time, energy and projects tend to receive the least amount of required to accomplish the assigned task. I wondered how this project might have looked if the assignment had been for each student to take on two roles throughout the semester instead of just one role at the end? I wondered if there was another way to provide the participants with leadership opportunities that would aid the overall ensemble and performance and allowed the individual to explore their artistic skills with the content.

In this chapter I examined how a Theatre For Dialogue course could be designed using feminist pedagogical approach in order to create student empowerment through the content and artistry, establish classroom ensemble through the exchange of collective practice, and evoke student leadership through the development of learning. I explored how the key concepts of empowerment, ensemble, and leadership, when intentionally structured into a TFD course can provide participants a liberatory learning experience that expands the content learned in the classroom out into the larger community. In the final chapter I reflect on the outcome of the course through the participants experience. I will conclude by making recommendations for future TFD course projects.

# Chapter 4

> If the goal of a project is 'social change,' those goals are not met by a relatively small group of people having a moment of magical connection that does not result in action in the real world. However, that connection is worth the experience for its own sake – it is pleasurable, it can be fun, it may be cathartic. When those moments of communion are experienced by an ensemble in a participatory workshop, the relationships built can last far beyond the scope of the workshop or project. Those moments change lives. (Snyder-Young 139)

I wondered if the students in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course had experienced, as Dani Snyder-Young suggests, "a moment of magical connection"? The last time I met with the students for the semester was two days after our performance sharing. I wondered if they would continue to be mental health activists on UT Austin's campus or if this project would become a distant memory in the years ahead. Would their friendships, which exuded such support and care in the classroom, turn into dinner parties or would their friendships eventually become just liking each other's Facebook status? In this final chapter I will reflect on the outcome of the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course. I will discuss limitations and offer recommendations for future TFD projects in the university setting.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

The ensemble sat in a circle, during the last class session and talked about the performance, the experience of creating a piece from scratch around the content of campus mental health and what it had felt like to share the work with an audience. The performance included moments of audience interaction where the participants, in the role of actor-facilitators, asked audience members to define the term "mental health," engage in dialogue around stressors and assist in the reading of campus mental-health statistics.

One participant reflected on her experience in relation to the interactive audience moments in the performance:

> I thought it was really nice having support and having people who were so willing to jump in and offer ideas. I was really appreciative of people who were so willing to come and be supportive. And I was so appreciative that we were all able to come together as a group and be like "okay, we're going to do this." It all came together and I thought the structure was really cool. It was a show – we did a show. It felt nice that we created something out of nothing. (Final Focus Group 25 Nov. 2014)

The participant's comments focused on how the element of support played a vital role in her experience of the TFD work. She noted how support given by the audience had helped her during the performance, but also that the support within the group had been needed in order to accomplish the task of creating a performative piece together. One key element that emerged from my analysis of our final focus group reflection on the TFD experience was that in order to empower risk taking and creative thinking, individuals need to engage in a supportive system. Another area that emerged was that the collaborative ensemble *process* of the TFD course had been more valuable than the final *product* that was shared with the audience.

> I was really proud of the performance even though it was a work in progress and we could have easily spent another semester working on it. It really has been about the progress we've made – it has been about the process and not the product. (Final Focus Group 25 Nov. 2014)

My hope for the semester had been for the students to engage in a process of dialogic meaning-making in the classroom in order to build content knowledge around campus mental health, to gain an understanding of their artistic perspective, and to think of themselves as agents of social change on the UT Austin campus.

The Theatre For Dialogue methodology provided students with an undergraduate course experience that focused on the facilitation of empowerment, ensemble and leadership. Shrewsbury reminds us that with a feminist pedagogy: the classroom can build a mutual community through shared dialogue, the students can and will uncover connections between themselves, others in the room, and the content, that the learning can and will go beyond the walls of the classroom and that the theory learned in the classroom can and will be extended into action that will then come back to inform the theory that leads back into action (11).

Throughout the semester in the classroom and on the weekly reflection document I actively used the word "ensemble" to refer to the classroom collective. In participant feedback at the end of the semester every student chose to use the word community when describing the group of participants as a whole (see Appendix B). One interpretation of this phenomenon is that the group did not feel comfortable using artistic vocabulary like "ensemble"; or, perhaps, participants believed their relationship to each other went beyond the classroom and theatrical spaces of "ensemble" – their relationship was best described as a "community." Perhaps, the group had taken the first important steps towards a type of critical consciousness as they re/claimed, re/named and transformed their relationship to campus mental health and each other.

## PROJECT LIMITATIONS

I created the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course to better understand the participants' experience in the Theatre For Dialogue approach developed by Lynn Hoare at UT Austin. However, the semester length and

student enrollment process were limitations to this research study. The research length of my course and student enrollment numbers created significant limitations within the research study.

First, my research process was only able to last one academic semester while Hoare's TFD course runs for two consecutive semesters. I wonder how the data might have differed if my TFD course had run for two semesters. I wonder what emergent theme(s) the participants in the second semester might have reflected on and how their continued ensemble support might have intersected with their artistic products.

Second, VAV's TFD course averages around fourteen enrolled students each year while my research study consisted of five individuals, whom all identified as females, aged 20-21 years old. Part of the reason this might have happened, is that my course was not a formally recognized class in the university so I was forced to recruit participants through an informational flyer and by word of mouth. I wonder what the data findings might have shown if there had been more community voices, artistic perspectives and experiences in the research. Applied theatre is theatre that is made *with* a community, *by* a community and *for* a community and therefore it is essential to engage the diversity of voices and experiences in *that* community, for *that* community (Snyder-Young 5). My ensembles' identities did not reflect the full range of identities in the university community, which served to limit the perspectives and experiences reflected in the research.

## FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on my documentation and analysis of participants' experience in an undergraduate TFD course that were discussed in this document. These recommendations are offered with acknowledgement of the aforementioned limitations and focus specifically on choices which I believe support the potential for a transformative learning experience within a TFD course within the university setting.

### Empowerment through Community Connection

In the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course the data indicated that the participants felt empowerment by the knowledge of campus specific content information and dialogical exchange during the guest visits with the community experts. The four guest facilitated sessions provided students with an opportunity to meet and engage in a dialogic meaning-making process with experts who work on the UT Austin campus in the field of mental health. The personal connections to the content and community organizations helped the participants gain a wider understanding of the work and systemic issues at play in the UT Austin community – specifically around the topics of mental health promotion, bystander advocacy, suicide, and student accommodations.

### Consider Course Time and Scope to Build Ensemble

In the TFD course, the data indicated that the check-in ritual at the top of each class session and the retreat played vital roles in the transformation of individuals into an ensemble – or what the participants termed, "a community." In order for this

transformative learning model to be successful the students need a large amount of time dedicated to activities that support and engage them in the opportunity to learn about the other individuals in the shared classroom space. I recommend that facilitators of TFD use a check-in ritual at the beginning of each class session to intentionally create space for the exchange of individual thoughts to occur. I would also recommend that facilitators be flexible about the amount of time required to complete the check-in ritual; I found our check-in grew longer throughout the semester as the students became more familiar with each other.

**Expand Leadership Opportunities**

In the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course the opportunity for students to take on a key role of leadership was activated through the Team Roles assignment towards the end of the semester. The data indicates that participants used this opportunity to expand their artistic perspectives around the content of mental health and the ways that they could artistically represent the content through artistic elements. I recommend that facilitators add additional opportunities for students to engage in leadership opportunities that pull on the individual student's skill set while also providing a space to engage in artistic representation and exploration.

**Establish an Extension of Advocacy**

At the end of the semester-long course the data indicated that participants in the *Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health* course had become aware of campus mental health issues and identified as mental health advocates. In Hoare's TFD course students are offered opportunities to continue working on UT

Austin's campus as advocates for interpersonal violence after the yearlong course has ended. Voices Against Violence provides undergraduate students with access to student organizations focused on interpersonal violence issues and an opportunity to become actor-facilitators in a touring TFD performance called *Get Sexy, Get Consent*. I recommend that facilitators research student organizations and other campus opportunities to create an extension of advocacy possibilities for the student advocate who wants to further their activism around the course content within the campus community setting.

## MOVING FORWARD

Parting ways with the students on our last day of class was both sad and satisfying. As I watched them hug each other and make promises of future dinner parties, I thought about how I was going to miss hearing about their lives. I wondered about the futures of the students: how Jane would do on the MCAT she had scheduled, would Cole follow through with all of the grad school applications she kept talking about, would Jada's trip to Nashville live up to her expectations, what class would Sophia finally decide to take and would Crimson continue with the ecstatic dance classes she had started to take? As I read over the research content gathered from the participants, a particular offer in a post-survey captured my attention: "You build a little community and it's such a safe place to discuss these topics. I always felt comfortable bringing my heart into the space" (Post-survey 27 Nov. 2104). Research professor and scholar Brené Brown believes that it is through courageous moments of sharing with vulnerability that we truly begin to make a human connection. The result of "mutually respectful vulnerability is

increased connection, trust, and engagement" (46). I will miss our class sessions together, the connections established through dialogue and the continuous learning from and within each other.

**Lingering Questions**

When I first considered exploring the content of mental health through the Theatre For Dialogue model I wondered if anybody cared about this issue. I often heard people talk about mental health in various forms: "you're crazy," "I'm about to have a nervous breakdown," and "that person is such a hot mess." Rarely did I hear anyone talk about mental health education in a positive light. Since this project, I have had the opportunity to share my knowledge of campus mental health services with several UT Austin students and I cannot help but wonder about the future of TFD and mental health at UT Austin. Will the Counseling and Mental Health Center find the work to be an effective model that they will continue to use and develop? Could other college campuses find interest or value in trying a TFD model in their own communities? How can an applied theatre form like TFD be given a chance to create ongoing systemic change in campus mental health education?

As a graduate student I am blessed with the opportunity to teach courses while I also attend the university as a student. I switch between the role of teacher and student several times a day, sometimes even as I walk down a hallway on campus. As I worked on the research of this project, facilitation of the course and on this document, I realized that I too had encountered a new relationship and understanding with mental health, as an individual and as a facilitator. As an individual I realized that in order to make deadlines,

graduate, and give to my students I have sacrificed a lot of my self-care practices. As a facilitator I now think about how to assist students when I see signs related to mental health issues, stressors and academic pressures. As I finish this project, I wonder how we make our students, our community and ourselves feel seen, supported and cared for in difficult moments of transition and daily life. How do we work as a collective community to take care of each other and to make sure no one feels alone?

# Appendices

# Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

*P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200*
*(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873*

FWA # 00002030

Date: 08/12/14

PI: Spring D Snyder

Dept: Theatre and Dance

Title: Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health

Re: IRB Expedited Approval for Protocol Number 2014-07-0095

Dear Spring D Snyder:

In accordance with the Federal Regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above referenced research study and found it met the requirements for approval under the Expedited category noted below for the following period of time: 08/12/2014 to 08/11/2015 . *Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.* If the research will be conducted at more than one site, you may initiate research at any site from which you have a letter granting you permission to conduct the research. You should retain a copy of the letter in your files.

Expedited category of approval:

☐ 1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

☐ 2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children2, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

☐ 3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by non-invasive means. Examples:
   (a) Hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner.
   (b) Deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
   (c) Permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction.

(d) Excreta and external secretions (including sweat).
(e) Uncannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue.
(f) Placenta removed at delivery.
(g) Amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor.
(h) Supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques.
(i) Mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings.
(j) Sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

☐ 4) Collection of data through non-invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications).
Examples:
(a) Physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy.
(b) Weighing or testing sensory acuity.
(c) Magnetic resonance imaging.
(d) Electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography.
(e) Moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

☐ 5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ 6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

☒ 7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ Use the attached approved informed consent document(s).

☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Documentation of Consent according to 45 CFR 46.117 and/or 21 CFR 56.109(c)(1).

☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Informed Consent according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).

**Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:**

1. Report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems.

2. Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s). Ensure the proposed changes in the approved research are not applied without prior IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. Changes in approved research implemented without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject must be promptly reported to the IRB, and will be reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the subjects continued welfare.

3. Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to participate.

4. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.

5. Use only a currently approved consent form, if applicable.
   Note: Approval periods are for 12 months or less.

6. Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects and their information.

7. Submit a Continuing Review Application for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year a reminder letter will be sent to you two months before your expiration date. If a reminder is not received from Office of Research Support (ORS) about your upcoming continuing review, it is still the primary responsibility of the Principal Investigator not to conduct research activities on or after the expiration date. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.

8. Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.

9. Include the IRB study number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

James P. Wilson

James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

## Appendix B: Weekly Reflection Form

**WEEKLY REFLECTIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Reflect on the check-in for this week. This could be about what you chose to share or thoughts on the experience as a whole.

2. What about this weeks session was most effective and why?

3. Where did you notice yourself feeling uncomfortable, wanting to hang back, struggling with content/process or with the group?

4. Describe moments when you felt more or less agency and why.

5. How has your relationship to mental health or theatre changed or shifted this week?

6. How has your connection to ensemble changed or shifted this week?

7. Comment on how the facilitator or the structure of this weeks activities impacted your experience.

## Appendix C: Researching Peers Assessment Assignment

**Researching Peers Project/Assessment** (15 points)

The objective of this project is to gather assessment information from undergraduates, whom are not in our class, as a way to bring in outside voices for our playbuilding process.
This can be executed in a range of ways, which will be decided in advance and approved through Spring. Students will work together in groups of three to create a qualitative assessment tool to administer to a set number of students during a specific time period. Students will then analyze and synthesize the data collected and report back to the class their findings in a *10-minute presentation on Thursday 9/25*.

Questions to administer (based on in class discussions and group decisions):

- *Define mental health?*
- *What does mental health mean to you?*
- *Where does someone go to seek mental health help? (on campus but also off)*
- *What does it mean to be an ally to someone with a mental health issue?*
- *What image comes to mind when you think of mental health?*
- *What does mental health sound like?*

If your group wants to add questions besides theses, such as asking for age and gender, please send me a copy of your new questions BEFORE you send them out to the student body.

## Appendix D: Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health Course Syllabus

**TFD: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health**
**Fall 2014**
TD 326P  Unique #26505
Times: Tuesday/Thursday 8am-9:15am
**Location:** Winship 2.180

**Project Director: Spring Snyder**
**Office location:** Winship B.122
**Office hours:** Tuesday 9:30-10:30am
**Mailbox:** Winship Main Office
**Email**: springsnyder@utexas.edu
**Cell:** 503-367-9674 (no calls after 8pm unless emergency)
*The best way for you to make an appointment is to talk with me after class or e-mail me with a few dates/times you are available

**Faculty Supervisor:** Professor Kathryn Dawson, Theatre and Dance
**E-mail:** kathryndawson@austin.utexas.edu

### Course Overview

This independent study course focuses on the use of a Theatre For Dialogue approach. Theatre For Dialogue (TFD) is an interactive theatre method used as a tool to engage students in dialogue and raise awareness around a variety of topics. During the semester participants will engage in and explore a variety of applied theatre methods including image theatre, adapted forum and role-play as a way to develop content. Class work will include personal reflections, gathering and researching the UT student population's perceptions of mental health and resources. The collected data will then be used in the devising of a TFD script to be performed to an invited audience at the end of the semester.

## Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Work collaboratively as an ensemble
- Identify and employ appropriate supportive ally responses to those seek mental health assistance on campus
- Identify available UT campus resources surrounding mental health assistance
- Describe the use of theatre as a tool for educational purposes
- Generate original theatre scenes based on realistic situations and gathered research
- To identify gaps in education surrounding perceptions of mental health on UT campus

## Teaching Methods

This course uses a variety of teaching methods including movement based activities, theatre games, readings and discussion.

## Required Reading

- *College of the Overwhelmed: The campus mental health crisis and what to do about it* by Richard Kadison and Theresa DiGeronimo. 2004
- Required text will be provided electronically or through Canvas or UT Box

## Guest Speakers

This semester we will have a few guest speakers from the CMHC (Counseling and Mental Health Center) visit and talk with us on issues of Mental Health and VAV (Voices Against Violence)

- Erin Burrows, VAV Prevention and Outreach Specialist
- Lynn Hoare, VAV Theatre For Dialogue Specialist
- Marian Trattner, VAV Health Education Coordinator. Be That One. Suicide Prevention Program
- Katy Redd, VAV Health Education Coordinator, Mental Health Promotion
- Emily Shryock, Services for Students with Disabilities

## Class Organization and Expectations

This class will be conducted partially as a seminar and partially as workshop/rehearsal. Students are responsible for active participation in class, and should be prepared to engage in each class session.

Attendance:
If you must miss a class, please notify Spring in advance. Because this work involves everyone in the group working together it is imperative that you are present for every class. We cannot make up for lost time. You are being held accountable for being responsible enough to show up. **You will be allowed one (1) unexcused absence during the semester without penalty**. More than one absence will result in the deduction of points from your final grade. Students are expected to arrive on time, if you are going to be late due to a specific reason please contact Spring in advance.

More than three (3) unexcused absences is considered excessive and unacceptable. If you accumulate more that three unexcused absences your final grade will drop by one whole grade (i.e. an A to a B). Because a large percentage of your grade is based on participation you should look at this policy not as if you are "allowed" 3 absences, but rather that your attendance in class is expected every class period.
Three (3) late arrivals (that is, not being in the room and ready to go when class starts at 8:00am) or early dismissals (that is, leaving before class is over at 9:15am) equals one absence.

Self-care:
Given the subject matter we discuss, we recognize that there might be issues that come up for students in the class. Please take care of yourself and seek outside help/support if you need to talk to someone about your feelings. We encourage you to speak with a counselor at the Counseling and Mental Health Center (call 471-3515 to make an appointment) or call Telephone Counseling (512-471-2255). You are always welcomed to talk with Spring outside of class.

Retreat
We will have one retreat during the semester. It will most likely happen on a Saturday and will be scheduled as a group.

## Assessment and Evaluation of Outcomes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Class Participation** | **30** |
| **-Attendance in class (one absence allowed)** | |
| **-Participation in class activities and discussions** | |
| **Weekly Reflection Journal (14 journals, 5pts each)** | **70** |
| **Theatre For Dialogue Observation** | **10** |
| **Researching Peers Project** | **15** |
| **Team Role** | **20** |
| **Creative Application of content** | **20** |
| **Performance Participation (2 performances, 20pts each)** | **40** |
| **Final Project: Archive of Journey and Participation** | **15** |
| | **Total: 200** |

**Class Participation** includes: **30pts**

- Being prepared and on time for EACH CLASS and communicating with the instructor when you are unable to be present on time: sharing your voice in class, listening and valuing the opinions of classmates as they express their thoughts.
- Being aware of when you need to step up or step back; sharing the space
- Being an active participant in exercises
- Using "I" statements when discussing issues and thoughts
- Being supportive to those in the room and working as an ensemble

Due to the nature of the in-class participation there will be no "makeup" sessions. Students who are absent on days presented material is due must take the initiative to speak with Spring about possibility of making up the exercise in a different way

**Weekly Reflection:** **70pts**

Each week you will document your process through a reflection paper. Every week the format will be the same but you are welcome to include any thoughts, reflections or observations you have about class discussion or exercises. Reflections will be graded on completion and deadlines. **Weekly Reflections are always due on Sunday midnight. Please include your name and date that the journal is due in your heading on the journal.** SUBMIT YOUR PAPER DIRECTLY TO SPRING BY EMAIL springsnyder@utexas.edu Weekly Reflections turned in late will receive 1-point deduction for each day they are late.

**Theatre For Dialogue Observation** **10pts**

There will be an opportunity for you to observe a Theatre For Dialogue performance this semester of *Get Sexy, Get Consent*. This will be an opportunity for you to see the TFD format in practice as well as to help you to start thinking about what elements you might want to add to our performance and find effective. After the performance you will write a 2-3 page reflection. You will receive a list of questions the help guide you through the response paper. **The reflection paper is due a week after your observation by midnight.** We will go over exact dates for clarity in class when we get the performance dates. Submit your observation directly to Spring via email. I will announce the dates for performances early in the semester when the show dates are released.

**Researching Peers Project** **15pts**

Each student will gather assessment information from undergraduates not in our class. This can be done in a range of ways, which will be decided in advance. Students will work together in groups to create a qualitative assessment tool to administer to a set number of students during a specific time period. Students will then analyze and synthesize the data collected and report back to the class their findings.

**Team Roles** **20pts**

You will be assigned to a specific role within the process. These roles will support the work of the ensemble and will be a conversation as we continue to move forward. How do you think your role can help the ensemble and development of this performance piece? Roles might include: stage manager, playwright, tech/design, audience interaction, audience assessment and promotional images. Due dates will range based on positions and will be announced in advance in class.

**Creative Application of Content** **20pts**

You will have 10 minutes to present a creative moment that could live in this piece. You will come to class ready with a product that you can either teach or perform. This product can be based off of the readings or discussions we've had in class, it can be movement based or fills a gap you think we need in the project.

**Invited Sharing Performance 40pts**
We will have an invited sharing performance of our work towards the end of the semester. It will be by invitation only. As a group you will know in advance when the performance will be scheduled for. It may not happen during class time so be prepared to make arrangements in advance to be available.

**Final Project: Achieve of Journey and Participation 15pts**
You will create an archive of your journey through this semester in the artistic form of your choice. This will provide you a space to chronicle your personal artistic process, philosophies and think critically about your experience in this class. You will be asked to think about the challenges, successes and surprises you've encountered through the process of creating a new Theatre For Dialogue piece.

**UNIVERSITY GRADING SCALE**

100 - 94 = A
93 - 90 = A-
89 - 87 = B+
86 - 84 = B
83 - 80 = B-
79 - 77 = C+
76 - 74 = C
73 - 70 = C- (Class failed/no credit: 73 and below – for graduate students)
69 - 67 = D+
66 - 64 = D
63 - 60 = D-
59 and below = F

******Note: This class MAY NOT be taken Pass/Fail******

****This syllabus is a working document and is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor****

**University Policies and Notices**

**The University of Texas Honor Code**
The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Professional Conduct in Class**
The professor expects students to act like professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty**
Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/).

**Documented Disability Statement**
Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

**Religious Holidays**
By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**
Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php.

**Safety**
As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present

some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**
If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy**
Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

**Use of Canvas in Class**
In this class we will be using Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at http://courses.utexas.edu—to distribute course materials, to record your VAV events for points, and to give students an opportunity to dialogue. Students can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

## Feedback Statement

During this course the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways, including through anonymous surveys about how the professor's teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

**Theatre For Dialogue: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health**
**Fall 2014**

| Date | Focus | Due |
|---|---|---|
| **WEEK 1:**<br><br>**Thurs 8/28** | Welcome and Introductions, Class Syllabus, Prior knowledge | Pre-Survey, Consent Forms<br><br>Reflective Journal Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 2:**<br><br>**Tues 9/2** | Applied Theatre<br>Mental Health<br>Ensemble Building | Readings:<br>• The Issue: Student Mental Health http://www.activeminds.org/issues-a-resources/the-issue<br>• *College of the Overwhelmed* by Kadison and DiGeronimo Pages 5-89<br>• Look at the HalfofUs website. http://www.halfofus.com/<br>• Watch *Call Me Crazy* (can be found on Netflicks streaming)<br>• *Applied Theatre: An Introduction*, from The Applied Theatre Reader, edited by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston |
| **Thurs 9/4** | Identity | Readings:<br>• *The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?* Beverly Daniel Tatum<br>• *The Cycle of Socialization* Bobbie Harro<br>• Intersectionality<br>• *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* Peggy McIntosh<br><br>Due in class: Identity Pie<br><br>Reflective Journal Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK** | Assessment Reports | Read: |

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|---|---|---|
| **3:**<br><br>**Tues 9/9** | Guest Katy Redd | 1. Focus Group Report<br>2. ACHA Report<br><br>Due: One question (Wha?) and one AH-HA |
| **Thurs 9/11** | Perceptions of Mental Health and Treatment | Watch: Brene Brown *Power of Vulnerability* TED Talk<br>https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability#t-93911<br>Read: *How Stigma Interferes with Mental Health Care* by Patrick Corrigan<br><br>Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 4:**<br><br>**Tues 9/16** | Bystander/Ally Behaviors<br><br>Guest Erin Burrows BeVocal | Read: BeVocal Website<br>http://www.wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal/<br>(There might be more reading- TBA)<br><br>Due: One question (Wha?) and one AH-HA |
| **Thurs 9/18** | Suicide Prevention<br><br>Guest Marian Trattner | Read:<br>1. *College of the Overwhelemed* (on Canvas) pgs 146-152<br>2. Read Be That One's web page: Warning Signs, I Need to Talk to Someone Now, How You Can Help a Friend and Resources<br>http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/bethatone/bethatone.html<br><br>Due: 1. One question (Wha?) and one AH-HA<br>2. Research Peer Project Due via e-mail. Send me your findings that you will present on Thursday 9/25<br><br>Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **9/20 or 9/21** | RETREAT | |
| **WEEK 5:**<br><br>**Tues 9/23** | Services for Students with Disabilities<br><br>Guest Emily Shryock | Read: SSD Website http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/<br>(There might be more readings- TBA)<br><br>Due: One question (Wha?) and one AH-HA |
| **Thurs 9/25** | Share Findings of Peer Perceptions | Share out findings in a presentational format<br>Know your points- what stands out to you. |

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|---|---|---|
| | | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 6:**<br><br>**Tues 9/30** | Playbuilding<br>Guest<br>Lynn Hoare | Read: Theatre For Dialogue website<br>http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/vav.html<br><br>Due: One question (Wha?) and one AH-HA |
| **Thurs 10/2** | Playbuilding | Read: *College of the Overwhelmed* pages 89-145<br><br>Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 7:**<br><br>**Tues 10/7** | Playbuilding | Creative Application Presentations Due |
| **Thurs 10/9** | Playbuilding | Creative Application Presentations<br><br>Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 8:**<br><br>**Tues 10/14** | Character Development | Team Role Check-In/Assign out<br><br>Work 8-Count Movement |
| **Thurs 10/16** | Facilitation | Who are these characters and how do they intersect?<br><br>Create scenario's<br><br>Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday<br><br>Proposal for Achieve project due via e-mail midnight on Sunday 10/19 |
| **WEEK 9:** | Transitions | |

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|---|---|---|
| **Tues 10/21** | | |
| **Thurs 10/23** | Transitions | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 10:**<br><br>**Tues 10/28** | Opening Moment | |
| **Thurs 10/30** | Opening Moment | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 11:**<br><br>**Tues 11/4** | Ending Moment | |
| **Thurs 11/6** | Ending Moment | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 12:**<br><br>**Tues 11/11** | Run all together | Team Role Assignments Due |
| **Thurs 11/13** | Run all together | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 13:** | Present this week | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Tues 11/18** | | |
| **Thurs 11/20** | Present this week | Weekly Reflection Due by Sunday |
| **WEEK 14:**<br><br>**Tues 11/25** | Reflection and Closing | Share Achieve Project<br>Final Reflection and Post Survey |
| **Thurs 11/27** | | NO CLASS THANKSGIVING |
| **WEEK 15:**<br><br>**Tues 12/2** | | NO CLASS |
| **Thurs 2/4** | | Archive Project Due by midnight |

## Appendix D: Researching Peers Assessment Assignment

**Researching Peers Project/Assessment** (15 points)

The objective of this project is to gather assessment information from undergraduates, whom are not in our class, as a way to bring in outside voices for our playbuilding process.
This can be executed in a range of ways, which will be decided in advance and approved through Spring. Students will work together in groups of three to create a qualitative assessment tool to administer to a set number of students during a specific time period. Students will then analyze and synthesize the data collected and report back to the class their findings in a *10-minute presentation on Thursday 9/25*.

Questions to administer (based on in class discussions and group decisions):

- *Define mental health?*
- *What does mental health mean to you?*
- *Where does someone go to seek mental health help? (on campus but also off)*
- *What does it mean to be an ally to someone with a mental health issue?*
- *What image comes to mind when you think of mental health?*
- *What does mental health sound like?*

If your group wants to add questions besides theses, such as asking for age and gender, please send me a copy of your new questions BEFORE you send them out to the student body.

## Appendix E: Participants Weekly Check-In Experience

| Week | Emerging Theme | Example of Participant Response to "Reflect on check-in this week" |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Self-Reflection | "A chance for me to share what I am feeling and have the class possibly understand." |
| 2 | Self-Reflection | "Allowed me to see everyone's thought process and opened my views on certain aspects and inspired me to think more." |
| 3 | Self-Reflection | "It was comforting to see I was not the only one who felt that school and the stress that comes with it is finally starting to kick in." |
| 4 | Ensemble | "I realized how every check-in we talk about our own mental health and it turns out a lot of us are experiencing a stress on our mental health." |
| 5 | Ensemble | "I realized that most of my peers mention stress, coping with stress and mental health on a regular basis." |
| 6 | Ensemble | "We feel more comfortable sharing parts of our lives and experiences with each other- it makes me feel more comfortable and connected to everyone." |
| 7 | Peer Influence | "[A participant] mentioned taking time out of their day to count their blessings. I hope to incorporate into my own life." |
| 8 | Peer Influence | "I can identify with [other participant]." |
| 9 | Peer Influence | "I followed [a participants] example." |
| 10 | Extension to Community | "I decided to introduce the idea of checking-in to my staff outing and it went really well." |
| 11 | Peer Influence | "It's nice finding similarities, specifically with [another participant] physical health because it is something that can feel like I'm alone in." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | Peer Influence | “I really enjoyed hearing [another participant’s] check-in.” |
| 13 | Ensemble | “It’s nice to have a community who can come together and share what we are struggling with.” |

# Appendix F: Creative Application Assignment

**Creative Application (20 points total)**
**TFD: Exploring Perceptions of Mental Health devising project**
**Due week of 10/7-10/9**

Requirements: You will have **15 minutes** to present a creative moment that could live in this piece. Come to class with a product that you can teach or perform.

What is a piece you think needs to be in this performance and how might you share it out?

It can be

- based on any part of content we have looked at, brought into the room
- a moment of movement (group, solo, choral or individual), monologue, image work, choral text with movement, or a scene that we have not improvised

Grading Rubric

- Student's application demonstrates relevance to topic (5 pts)
- Student's application offers new, interesting and creative way to explore relevant content (5 pts)
- Presentation of creative application is within time frame (5 pts)

Students will sign up for a presentation day. Three performances for each class session.

## Appendix G: Team Role Assignment

### Team Roles

You will select a specific role to help the ensemble. These roles will help support the work of the ensemble and will be a conversation as we continue to move forward. Think about how the role you select will help the ensemble and development of the performance piece. Roles might include those listed below or you might select a role that isn't listed but you think is a vital role that is needed to help the ensemble and performance. Due dates will be decided upon your specific role and will be announced in advance.

**Playwright-** Helps to create and update the script. This includes implementing moments from class and editing the format.

**Stage Manager**- Helps to make sure the script has the updated elements added after each class session. Has the knowledge of the performance structure and knows the entrances and exits of each performer, sets up the set/props and helps with performance organization.

**Audience Survey**- A survey given to audience members after they view the performance. What questions do we want to know in regards to audience responses? How do we continue to gather knowledge that we are interested in?

**Media and Promotion-** Help to create a logo, a flyer or media elements that could be used for this performance and can live with the project if it moves forward. Creates an invitation to the performance.

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# Vita

Spring Snyder holds a BA from the University of Montana, Missoula in Drama. She will receive her MFA from the University of Texas at Austin from the Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities program. While pursuing her undergraduate degree, she co-founded a youth activist theatre group called ActiveNow! and spent a year abroad at EWHA Women's University in Seoul, South Korea. In Seoul she studied Women's Studies, traditional masked dance and psychodrama. After graduating from the University of Montana, she relocated to Portland, Oregon where she worked as an actor and a teaching artist for Missoula Children's Theatre, Oregon Children's Theatre, Young Players, Sight Theatre Group and a wide variety of Portland area elementary schools. She has taught professional development for Drama For Schools and taught at ZACH Theatre in Austin, Texas. As an applied theatre practitioner Spring's work focuses on education for social justice with and for all communities and identities. Internationally she has taught Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to Jesuit priests in India, high-school students in South Korea and trained with Sanjoy and Sima Ganguly at the Jana Sanskrtiti Theatre of the Oppressed Organization in Kolkata, India.

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This thesis was typed by Spring Snyder